



Redwood Library  
(NEWPORT, R.I.)

THE GARDNER BLANCHARD PERRY FUND









TRADITIONS OF BRITISH  
STATESMANSHIP



# TRADITIONS OF BRITISH STATESMANSHIP

SOME COMMENTS ON PASSING EVENTS

BY

THE HON. ARTHUR D. ELLIOT

REDWOOD LIBRARY,  
NEWPORT, R. I.

LONDON

CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD

10 ORANGE STREET LEICESTER SQUARE WC 2

1918




SEP 25 1919

F°FE

E15

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	vii
I. GENERAL LINES OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY	I
II. RELATIONS WITH GERMANY IN THE PAST .	20
III. GROWTH OF ILL-FEELING BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY . . . . .	48
IV. THE OUTBREAK OF WAR . . . . .	72
V. PREPARATION FOR WAR AND FIRST STEPS .	101
VI. DISAPPOINTMENT AND CRITICISM . . . .	112
VII. BRITISH, GERMANS, AND METHODS OF WAR- FARE . . . . .	125
VIII. CHANGES AT HOME . . . . .	140
IX. IRELAND AND THE WAR . . . . .	161
X. THE WAR AND HOME POLITICS . . . .	179
XI. TOWARDS PEACE . . . . .	198
XII. BEGINNING A NEW ERA . . . . .	219



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2025



## INTRODUCTION

IN taking a survey of British Foreign Policy it is impossible not to be struck by the consistency of aim which on the whole for a very long period it has displayed, and to remark the absence of all spirit of intrigue from the minds of statesmen who have guided it at home, and the absence of dishonourable methods from the practice of their representatives whose duty it has been to further that policy abroad.

“Rarely do documents leap to light that shame the memory of British Ministers. . . . The more thoroughly British Foreign Policy is examined the better it comes out.” This is at all events the opinion of two men, perhaps more competent than any others to form one, on the character of our Foreign Office in modern times. (Dr. Holland Rose<sup>1</sup> and the late Dr. S. R. Gardiner.)

If “secret diplomacy is to be abolished,” whatever that may mean, our nation will not come off worst in the new Palace of Truth in which some of our advanced politicians intend to house in the future the Foreign Secretaries and Ambassadors of the world.

Whilst then our foreign policy has been consistent, honest, and above-board, has it been fairly open to the charge of blundering incompetence invariably brought against it by excited criticism in every great crisis? Cabinets, foreign secretaries, ambassadors, being all human, have no doubt occasionally erred; but when their action is compared or contrasted with the management of foreign affairs by other States, we find as little reason to blush for a low standard of British intelligence as for a low standard of British honour. In the last hundred years, has our foreign policy or has our diplomacy been a conspicuous failure compared with that of

<sup>1</sup> “Origins of the War,” by J. Holland Rose.

France, or Germany, or Russia, or Austria ? Most assuredly history will not so consider it.

Recent years of war must continually have brought before the minds of the present generation the trials of their ancestors in the old two-and-twenty years' struggle with France. Again and again, the successes and failures, the boasting and the despondency, the doubts, anxieties, criticisms, race-hatreds, have seemed but a repetition of the experiences of our great-grandfathers. At home even our old friends the "forestallers" and "regraters" have come to life again under the new name of "profiteers." The Continental successes of the enemy, the occasional failure or withdrawal of an ally, our own successes on the Ocean and beyond it, the frequent prediction of national financial ruin, all repeat the incidents of an old and prolonged story half forgotten by a generation whose recollection of that historic struggle centres on the glories of Trafalgar and Waterloo. Now, as then, runs through the nation as a whole the deep fixed resolve to win the war—to achieve for ourselves security, and for Europe freedom.

In one important—almost all-important—respect, however, we have been far better off than were our ancestors during many years of their uphill war. We are a far more united people. Pitt's difficulties at home were great ; the disaffection, which then undoubtedly existed, was magnified in days of panic into a menace of revolution. To-day, the internal peace and quiet of the nation rest on a much wider and surer foundation. Since his time great constitutional reforms have done their work well. The war is the nation's own work, not due to the ambition or scheming of their rulers. This the people know and feel, and accordingly they bear with hardly a grumble burdens, and make sacrifices, greater than those which tempted many men in old days almost to "despair of the Republic."

Englishmen will look back with pride to the part played by their country on the stage of European history in July and August, 1914. The great work of general pacification now lies before us, and demands not less the employment of the highest statesmanship. The difficulty will be in the

practical application to the facts of those excellent principles repeatedly enunciated by the constitutional rulers and statesmen amongst the Allies on both sides of the Atlantic—"self-determination," "no annexation," "racial nationality," and so on. It has probably been wise hitherto not to particularise too closely the terms on which the Allies, if and when they become victorious, should insist; but surely the time is now approaching when men should begin, in their own minds, clearly to formulate their aims! Granting that the Allied victory is complete, the difficulty of the future will consist not so much in getting the consent of the vanquished, as in the carrying out successfully on the spot the novel arrangements come to by the framers of a new European system.

It is the non-recognition of facts by the belligerent nations that renders so remote the prospect of peace. When Baron von Kühlmann tells his countrymen that they cannot get all they want by mere military achievement, and that wars have been known to last for thirty years, he says what German statesmen must be aware is the truth. His words, nevertheless, give a terrible shock to the vast majority of Germans who have been taught to anticipate complete and immediate victory. It is probable that his plain language may have brought peace nearer, though it naturally brought about his own fall. In war-time, oratory of the big drum type in all countries pleases best, though it does not always best serve national interests. Yet if the approach of peace is really desired, speakers and writers might reflect that the difficulty of arranging terms is enormously increased by everything that tends to embitter and perpetuate the bitter hostility between nations. Temper, not less than terms, affects the probability of peace, and the prospect of its endurance. A mere "military decision" will not establish the peace of the world.

In our home politics it is impossible to doubt that during this time of war the seeds of mighty changes have been sown. The thoughts of the people have been entirely taken up with the war and how to win it. Neither statesmen nor Parliament could give serious attention to anything else, and



perhaps some day the country may regret that measures of transcendent importance should have been passed, and irrevocable steps taken, without adequate consideration and genuine public debate—measures which must have lasting effects on its future.

The electorate is the basis on which our whole constitution rests. Almost without knowing it, the country is about to make a tremendous experiment, different in kind as well as in extent from reform measures in the past. We are entering upon virgin soil and the crops that we reap from it will be of a different, let us hope of a superior quality to what we have known in the past.

Difficulties undoubtedly lie ahead as well as very great changes ; but whilst the character of the nation remains the same there is every reason to hope that these changes will ultimately conduce to the welfare and strength of the British Kingdom and Empire.

In the following pages I venture to make a few comments on recent events, and on subjects suggested by them.

A. D. E.

## SOME RECENT BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

THE ORIGIN OF THE WAR . . .	J. H. ROSE.
THE ANGLO-GERMAN PROBLEM. . .	CHARLES SAROLEA.
THE GERMAN WAR BOOK. . . .	J. H. MORGAN.
IMPERIAL GERMANY . . . . .	PRINCE VON BÜLOW.
PRUSSIANISM AND ITS DESTRUCTION	NORMAN ANGELL.
NELSON'S HISTORY OF THE WAR .	COLONEL BUCHAN.
ORDEAL BY BATTLE. . . . .	F. S. OLIVER.
ENGLAND'S EFFORT . . . . .	MRS. HUMPHRY WARD.
TOWARDS THE GOAL. . . . .	MRS. HUMPHRY WARD.
GERMANY BEFORE THE WAR . . .	BARON BEYENS.
VINDICATION OF GREAT BRITAIN .	HAROLD BEGBIE.
THE NEW PROTECTIONISM . . . .	J. A. HOBSON.
DEDUCTIONS FROM THE WORLD WAR . . . . .	FREYTAG LORINGHOVEN.
HISTORY OF THE IRISH REBELLION OF 1916. . . . .	WELLS AND MARLOW.
GERMAN OPINION AND POLICY BEFORE THE WAR . . . . .	G. W. PROTHERO.
A LEAGUE OF NATIONS . . . . .	VISCOUNT GREY.
AMERICA AND FREEDOM. (STATEMENTS OF PRESIDENT WILSON.) FOREIGN POLICY OF SIR E. GREY, 1906— 1915 . . . . .	GILBERT MURRAY.
A CENTURY OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY . . . . .	GOOCH AND MASTERMAN.
NATIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT . . .	RAMSAY MUIR.





# TRADITIONS OF BRITISH STATESMANSHIP

## CHAPTER I

### GENERAL LINES OF BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

THE momentous events of the summer of 1914 were evidently destined to change the history of the world. It is still far too soon to attempt to foresee the consequences that must result from the world-wide conflagration arising out of the dissensions between Austria and Servia earlier in that year. But it is already certain that the Peace which must ultimately be reached will leave little in the relations of the European Powers to each other unchanged ; and infinitely probable also that the internal polity of several of the great contending nations will be fundamentally affected. In our own country it can hardly be doubted that National Finance, that the trade and commerce of the nation, internal and external, that the ownership and occupation of land, and the industries connected therewith, and that many of our social arrangements will be regulated on new principles, and that very considerable constitutional changes will be effected in the system under which we have been so long governed.

The Prime Minister in cheerful mood has held out to us, on the return of peace, the promise of a "Golden Age." The first great desideratum, he agrees with Mr. Asquith and every other British statesman in holding, is the decisive victory of the Allies. It will then be for the statesmen of Europe to lay the foundations of a just, stable, and enduring peace. Assuredly neither the existing conditions of the world, nor our historical knowledge of the actions of Congresses and

Conferences in the past, can tend to make us underrate the difficulties with which a new "Congress of Vienna" will be faced. Some settlement must indeed be arrived at, if Europe is to survive at all the terrible tragedy, the incalculable sufferings, the destruction of life and of property of recent years of war. But it is pitching our hopes too high to imagine that we shall step straight out of these horrors and miseries into a Golden Age of universal contentedness and prosperity when for ever wars and rumours of war shall be no more.

What a contrast between the fateful summer of 1914 and the happy summer season exactly a hundred years earlier that welcomed the close of the Napoleonic Wars? After more than twenty years of almost incessant war victory then had crowned our arms; England and Europe were saved.

Men called to mind the words of Pitt's last speech, spoken after Trafalgar nine years before. "Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions and will, I trust, save Europe by her example."

Our war, it is true, has not lasted for two-and-twenty years, but we can well understand to-day the happy language with which that generation welcomed the coming of triumphant peace. "The general joy and overwhelming emotion with which the wonderful events of the past three months must have filled all the regions of the earth. . . . The Peace had come upon the world like the balmy air and flushing verdure of a late Spring after the dreary chill of a long and interminable winter; and the refreshing sweetness with which it has visited the earth, feels like Elysium to those who have just escaped from the driving tempests it has banished."

The language of Jeffrey, one of our ablest of political and critical writers and in personal disposition one of the least sanguine of men, in May, 1814, is full of hope not merely for the permanent peace of the world, but also for that period of prosperity, progress, and reform which it would at once bring to our own country. Yet before the year was ended the same *Review* was eloquently yet anxiously urging that the re-establishment of the ancient kingdom of Poland (still unaccomplished a century later) was the *first* and most sacred duty of the victorious Allies; whilst many distressful years

were to pass, before the efforts of itself and other reformers brought to anything like fruition the sanguine anticipations of progress and prosperity at home, which they had formed in the great day of victory.<sup>1</sup>

The whole course of events during the last three years has necessarily given a rude shock to the hopes and confident anticipations of the many good and patriotic men, who till recently firmly believed that the conditions of our modern world, that Christian teaching and education, that the spread of commerce, the constant and friendly intercourse between citizens of different States, the intelligent appreciation of the advantages and blessings of peace—in short that religion, morality, and enlightened self-interest—were co-operating to render war between the more civilised nations of the earth almost impossible.

For nearly forty years after Waterloo the great nations of the world, as between themselves, remained at peace. Relations had, it is true, on several occasions become strained between them, and the statesmen of those days deserve credit for their success in avoiding rupture. The great nations could not for a long time forget what war had meant. Moreover, they were burdened with debt; and as Henry Brougham said, "Great Britain had been bound over to keep the peace in a sum of eight hundred millions of pounds." New generations had grown up, the burden of national debt and taxation had been immensely diminished. Still, for all that, would not really peace-loving statesmen be equally successful in the future in avoiding war? So many, perhaps most, Englishmen at one time reasoned. In the middle of the nineteenth century belief in "pacifism" rose to its highest pitch, and the Great Exhibition of 1851 was thought to inaugurate an era in which national ambitions, jealousies, and animosities would once for all give place to the peaceful and honourable rivalry of trade and industry—a rivalry which would unite the nations in the bond of interest and increase the prosperity of them all.

In truth there was much to make the ordinary man, espe-

<sup>1</sup> See articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, "State and Prospects in Europe," and "Restoration of Poland," Vols. XXII. and XXIII., 1814.

#### 4 TRADITIONS OF BRITISH STATESMANSHIP

cially the ordinary democratic man, believe that a great change had really come over the world. In the past the personal rivalries of sovereigns, the selfishness of aristocrats, and the ambition of soldiers had been responsible for bringing upon the people (who could gain no advantage from it) all the miseries of war. War was a concomitant of barbarism and popular ignorance, and in Europe at all events, barbarism had given place to civilisation and enlightenment. Moreover, democracy has made giant strides towards universal rule. We have in great measure bid adieu to that "vain world" of our ancestors "that kings and priests were plotting in!" In greater or less degree, government for the people and by the people prevails throughout the world. The nations have become themselves responsible for national policy; yet armies and fleets have not tended to disappear, nor general peace to become more secure.

As we look back upon 1851 we see that the Great Exhibition was no temple of peace. After nearly forty years of peace we were already on the eve of the Crimean War. The sixty-three years that have since passed have witnessed the most terrible series of wars the world has known, fought in both hemispheres and on every continent. In the light of experience therefore the high hopes of the mid-century are proved to have been fallacious. The dream of perpetual and universal peace had gone. Still the British people, conscious as they were of their own love of peace and of the pacific disposition of British statesmanship which had been so often and so successfully manifested, were loth, and rightly loth, to believe that they would again find themselves plunged in a life and death struggle on the Continent with one of the great military nations of Europe. Even though universal peace might be a dream, Great Britain's position differed so greatly from that of continental countries and she was so free from the ambitions that stirred, and the dangers that threatened them, that men might well think that as in many former wars she might in her own and in the general interest stand in the future apart from the conflict in which other nations were foolish enough to engage. After all, only once in the past hundred years had Great Britain been at war



with a European nation; and the single precedent of the Crimean War was considered to be a warning rather than an example.

In the opinion of Lord Palmerston "man is a fighting animal." The Cobdenite soul was naturally exasperated and shocked by such a sentiment. Nevertheless it seems improbable that war will disappear from the earth till a considerable change has taken place in the nature and passions of men. It does not suffice to reform and popularise their system of government. In not one of the many nations now engaged in this terrible struggle has there been the slightest sign that popular sentiment has been opposed to war. The onward march of democracy has brought with it much good; but unfortunately there has been little sign that democracy means peace; and in our country it would be difficult to prove that British peace rests nowadays on a much more secure basis than in pre-reform times.

It is hardly too much to say that for the last four or five generations there has been very general agreement amongst our statesmen as to the fundamental principles upon which the foreign policy of the country should be conducted, and at the ends to which it should be directed; though at times differences have been wide and vehement as to the means by which those ends could be best attained. An ambitious foreign policy, in the sense in which those words describe the projects of a Napoleon, a Czar, or a Bismarck, has for a long time past played little or no part in the guidance of our foreign affairs. It is the nature of party government to exaggerate to an enormous degree the extent and importance of political differences. Opposition statesmen in a position of "greater freedom and less responsibility," to use Mr. Gladstone's phrase, will as a matter of course pour scorn on the action and motives of those who bear the burden of office. And yet when they themselves come to the helm it by no means follows that the ship's course will be greatly altered. When in 1806 Fox succeeded Pitt the change of ministry did not put an end to the French War. On the contrary,

"Dishonour's peace he spurned,  
The sullied olive branch returned,"

## 6 TRADITIONS OF BRITISH STATESMANSHIP

and for another nine years the war continued. And at that later date, the spring of 1815, it may well be doubted whether, in spite of Lord Grey's language in opposition, had he been himself in power, he would have hung back from the campaign of Waterloo.

National security not national aggrandisement has been the persistent aim of British statesmanship. The defence of the British Empire against aggression and of British interests at home and abroad, and, as contributing thereto, the maintenance of peace amongst the great Powers of the world, have throughout been with every ministry of whatever political party the principal objects of their solicitude and effort. Hence in the consideration of the nature and the scale of our national armaments, and of our naval and military preparations for war, our readiness for efficient defence not our capacity to rival in the field the huge compulsorily raised armies of the continent has been the chief care of our statesmen. The policy of statesmen and the sentiments of the people have alike been founded on the fact that Great Britain is not part of the continent of Europe, and on their belief that history has taught them that with proper provision they can render their country secure against the attacks of the most formidable military dictators from across the seas. The conditions of the case differentiated our position altogether from that of the great military nations of whom, in truth, we were very little in dread; and hence preparations for defence which by the light of history and of our own experiences seemed to us adequate for our purposes, would not only not have satisfied, but must have seemed almost contemptible to the Napoleons and War Lords of the continent, whose circumstances and outlook on foreign affairs were absolutely different.

The one unchanging necessity for the British people from generation to generation is the maintaining of their strength at sea. The words of the Marquess of Halifax in 1694 are as true to-day as they were then. "The Importance of our being strong at Sea was ever very great, so in our present circumstances it is known to be much greater; because, as formerly our Force of Shipping contributed greatly to our

Trade and safety, so now it is become indispensably necessary to our very Being. It may be said now to England, 'Martha, Martha, thou art busy about many things ; but one thing is necessary.' To the Question what shall we do to be saved in this world ? there is no other answer than this, Look to your Moate. The first article of an Englishman's creed must be that he believeth in the Sea. Without that there needeth no General Council to pronounce him incapable of Salvation here." And Halifax goes on to emphasise the favour of heaven towards his countrymen since it has enabled them to become free, rich and quiet, the envy of our neighbours for a good fortune which it is impossible for them to imitate.

Our moat—the surrounding seas—is a defensive outwork. It threatens no one. Always the main element in the defence of the kingdom it is now the essential safeguard of the heart of a vast empire. Our own security, dependent upon the superiority of our sea power, enables us to-day, as it has enabled our ancestors in the past, to use national strength not merely for our own selfish interests, but also to strike down the overweening ambition and military aggression of rulers who would subdue the rest of Europe to their will. No Englishman need blush at the manner in which his countrymen have on the whole utilised through the ages the advantage of their own geographical position. Not for themselves only, but for the protection also of the freedom and independence of others have British statesmen employed the mighty strength of the Island State.

With all their general concurrence as to national fundamental principles of foreign policy our statesmen have, of course, often differed widely as to what are British objects and interests, and as to the direction from which danger to them threatened. In the French Republican and Napoleonic wars the defeat of France by Great Britain appeared to Pitt and his successors to be the sole means of preserving the independence of the nation and the liberties of Europe, and the great bulk of the nation supported them. From the middle to the end of the nineteenth century Russia rather than France appeared to British statesmanship the more probable source of danger ; and in quite recent years the military and

## 8 TRADITIONS OF BRITISH STATESMANSHIP

naval power and the aggressive conduct of Germany forced our Government and people to see in the Kaiser the possibility of a more dangerous enemy than the country had known since the days of Napoleon.

In all these instances—Napoleon, Nicholas, Kaiser—a small minority of statesmen and public have regarded or professed to regard the dangers threatened to ourselves as either greatly exaggerated or altogether chimerical; and have deprecated measures of military and naval preparation as likely to bring about that very disturbance of the peace of the world which all responsible British statesmanship wished to avoid. It seems probable that a difference of temperament and of character rather than a difference of actual aim in foreign policy accounted for the divergent counsels of our statesmen. To a Palmerston it was evident that there would be no security for Great Britain and for British interests all over the world unless the nation maintained at a high level its armed strength by sea and land. To him an attack upon our coasts was a very real danger indeed, against which in accordance with the military and naval opinions of that day elaborate measures of defence were taken. To Mr. Gladstone, on the other hand, his own intense love of peace, and his belief in the goodness of others, made it almost impossible to imagine that any nation could be so wicked as to attack us. If *we* would only set a good example, Europe would follow it; and a reliance on the influence of that sense of international rights and justice which prevailed amongst Christian nations—our own and others—would be the best security for the peace of the world.

It is unnecessary to attribute any special virtue or political altruism either to the British people or its leaders in this absence of selfish desire to better themselves at the expense of their European neighbours. In the last hundred years at all events there has been nothing in our circumstances to foster the growth of any such ambition. The world, outside Europe, is wide. Men and capital overflowing from the Mother Country found occupation in other hemispheres, and led to an enormous increase in the area and population of the British Empire. Other nations, whose colonising efforts came



later, and were largely of artificial growth, were less fortunate. "Places in the sun" were now not easily to be found by late comers into the colonial field. In other respects also Great Britain has not had the same inducements for troubling European peace as have told heavily on some other nations. The great national objects of a Cavour or a Bismarck could never have been attained had the peace of Europe been the principal object of those statesmen. Italian unity and German consolidation—both honourable ambitions—were the passionate desire of great races, led by men of the first order of statesmanship, with whom, however, the end to be won was so transcendent that little heed was paid to the righteousness of the means employed in attaining it. In recent years the British people have been influenced by no motives leading them to welcome even a successful European war. They had no defeats to avenge, no captured provinces to regain, no territory to emancipate, no long-standing ambition of any kind to gratify by territorial expansion; above all no racial jealousy to inspire hostility against rival nations—Teuton *versus* Slav, Russian *versus* Turk, Frenchman *versus* German, Italian *versus* Austrian. Great Britain alone had nothing to gain by war, and knew it, excepting always *greater security for peace*.

For a long series of years this persistent striving after peace has marked the attitude of British foreign policy. There has been little difference in the language held by the responsible leaders of political parties when in office. With the possible exception of Disraeli, British Ministers have felt no desire that the country should play a showy part on the European stage. The Gladstone and the Salisbury Ministries and their successors have shown the same spirit. Language of provocation has been avoided, there has been no attempt to press extreme rights, still less to threaten; whilst there has been on very many occasions great readiness to compromise. Indeed, so far as the surface feeling of the moment went there has often been, on the part of Ministers, too much of the spirit of conciliation to please the public. The tone of a large section of the press, playing up to the sentiment of the moment, has sometimes been deserving of less praise; and



language of a provocative and even exasperating character to other nations has been too common. Statesmen out of office may have been on occasions, if less reckless than the newspapers, still too prone to forget the mischief that may be done abroad by utterances, largely discounted at home by our familiarity with the exaggerations of party polemics.

In the Great War, it was the habit of the small but fierce parliamentary opposition of the day to charge Pitt with being the inveterate enemy of the French nation. His detestation of "French principles" and of Republican institutions was said to be the principal obstacle to peace. In France he was regarded as the personification of British malignity and perfidy, whose corrupt agencies were everywhere at work to destroy the patriotic efforts of the Republic.

The German people of to-day appeared to be imbued with similar feelings of hatred towards Sir Edward Grey. Yet as a matter of historical fact no British Minister ever valued peace more highly than Pitt, or struggled more strenuously in its behalf, or in his earlier life had shown himself so free from anti-Gallican sentiment. Why then did he in 1797 and 1800 persist in carrying on the war? This was the question which in the former year Tierney in the House of Commons, with all the vehemence of an opposition leader, put to the Prime Minister, "Why are we at war?" He demanded from Pitt a plain answer in a single sentence to a plain question, not the elaborate explanations of a special pleader, full of all those "ifs" and "buts," to which he declared that Pitt with lawyer-like mind had accustomed the House of Commons. "I can tell him," replied the latter, "not in a sentence, but in a single word that the object of the war is security—security against a danger, the greatest that ever threatened the world. It is security against a danger which never existed in any past period of society. It is security against a danger which in degree and extent was never equalled; against a danger which threatened all the nations of the earth; against a danger which has been resisted by all the nations of Europe, and resisted by none with so much success as by this nation, because by none has it been resisted so uniformly and with so much energy."

The return of the Bourbons to the throne of France might be the best means by which a secure peace could be re-established, but Pitt did not make it an end in itself, nor would he refuse to negotiate till Frenchmen undertook to recall their exiled sovereign. Always, he urged, the advantages of peace negotiations depended on times and seasons and the circumstances of the moment ; for in an unfortunate hour, even in the interests of peace, negotiation might do more harm than good. " I say," he declared in the speech already quoted, " that it is prudent for us not to negotiate at the present moment. . . . This is my plea, and on no other do I wish to be tried by God and my country." In the previous year Pitt's readiness to treat with France had given great dissatisfaction to some of his colleagues and political friends. Even in those days of frenzied excitement and bitter hatreds the Prime Minister kept his head cool whilst too many had lost the sense of distinguishing between what was wise and what was foolish—almost between what was right and what was wrong. Who would treat at all with a " nation of regicides," with " an accursed race," or tolerate those who had absorbed the French " doctrine of cannibalism ? " This was the heated language of the hour. " I feel it my duty," wrote Pitt to his colleague the Foreign Secretary, a good deal to the distaste of the latter, " as an English Minister and a Christian to use every effort to stop so bloody and wasting a war." Pitt's hope of a reasonable accommodation with France was disappointed by the result of Lord Malmesbury's meeting with the representatives of the Directorate at Lille. A " nominal and delusive peace " he would not have. Then with a clear conscience and the knowledge that he had done everything in his power to bring about a real peace he bent all his energies to the further prosecution of the war.

The fact is that however strong may be the desire of British statesmen in modern times to preserve peace, this of itself does not and cannot guarantee the country against war. Pitt, as we have seen, felt that in 1797 and 1800 the nation had no alternative. If in the later year he could have obtained fair terms and security he would not have hesitated to make peace even with Bonaparte. When Fox ultimately

succeeded him it was only to carry on the war. Between the Napoleonic wars and the present war the Crimean War was the only one in which Great Britain was in conflict with a European Power, and that war was entered upon by that most peace-loving of all British Prime Ministers—Lord Aberdeen. In spite of all past and present party tauntings of the one side by the other—"Jingoism," "Peace at any Price," "Little Englanders," "Pacifism"—it is impossible to find any wide gulf of principle dividing responsible British statesmanship on questions of this kind. No doubt there are "Jingoes" and "Pacifists" on the extreme wings of the two parties, who may at times exert influence, but who carry less weight with those actually governing the country than is often supposed. Mr. Gladstone was no annexationist, and had no desire to "paint the map red," but the occupation (and ultimately the acquisition) of Egypt was his doing. Lord Palmerston gave up Corfu, and Lord Salisbury Heligoland; but neither Palmerston nor Salisbury were "Little Englanders," and each thought the transaction a right one in itself, and on the whole in his country's interest.

The British islands are well protected from an attack by our "Moat" and naval power. Yet the nation cannot, if it would, wash its hands of all concern in what happens beyond the Four Seas. The aloofness from European complications maintained in the past by the United States of America (which the changed conditions of the world were making more and more difficult for them) has at length come to an end. It never was possible for us. The British Empire is not a self-contained continent separated by a ring fence from the rest of the earth. Its interests lie and its people dwell in every quarter of the globe; and the freedom of the seas from hostile domination is essential to its very existence. We cannot but be affected by the action of other great Powers by the ambitions of foreign rulers, by the temper and dispositions of other nations. "Security" in the days of Halifax and of Pitt, and much more in our own time, meant something far wider than the power of repelling an attempted invasion of the British islands. Colonial expansion, as Bismarck saw, is attended with much risk of jarring and

complications with other colonising States. Hence he observed with satisfaction the frequent soreness between Great Britain and Russia, and the occasional irritation between Great Britain and France, the suspicion and the "pin pricks" brought about by rival colonial ambitions. He would have preferred that Germany should avoid these risks, concentrate on a European policy, and make use of the jarings between other colonising nations to prevent the growth amongst them of a solid friendship which might develop some day into an anti-German Alliance and coalition.

Though, however, it is true that in its main principles British foreign policy has ever been to defend the interests of Great Britain and to keep the peace, neither her statesmen nor the British people can justly be accused of inveterate insular selfishness making them indifferent to the welfare, the rights, and aspirations of the rest of the world. Ministers are trustees for the British Empire and are bound to give their first thoughts to its safety in the present and in the future ; but this has not confined their active sympathies to the direct protection of the safety and interests of their own fellow-countrymen, or restrained them on occasion from employing the moral and material power of the nation in the assistance of others. The cause of "civil and religious liberty all over the world"—the old Whig toast—met with a good deal of response in all parties and amongst all classes in the country. And certainly, to give only a few names of statesmen, neither Canning, nor Palmerston, nor Russell, nor Gladstone could be accused of want of sympathy with the aspirations of smaller nations, or of indifference to the exhibition by the great military powers of a desire to trample on the rights of weaker States.

Having quoted Pitt's famous speech on "Security," let us turn to Palmerston's in the House of Commons in June, 1848, on a subject that has frequently divided opinion, viz. : the expediency from the British point of view of foreign alliances as against a position of independence or "isolation." His language reflected then, and probably still reflects, the general feeling of his countrymen. Lord Palmerston, after having stated that his efforts had always



been to preserve peace, and that in all the Governments with which he had been connected those endeavours had been successful, went on as follows :—

“ I hold with respect to alliances that England is a power sufficiently strong to steer her own course, and not to tie herself as an unnecessary appendage to the policy of any other Government. I hold that the real policy of England is to be the champion of justice and right ; pursuing that course with moderation and prudence, not becoming the Quixote of the world ; but giving the weight of her moral sanction and support whenever she thinks that wrong has been done. As long as she sympathises with right and justice, she will never find herself altogether alone. She is sure to find some other State of sufficient power, influence and weight, to support and aid her in the course she may think fit to pursue ; therefore I say it is a narrow policy to suppose that this country or that is to be marked out as the eternal ally or the perpetual enemy of England. We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual—those interests it is our duty to follow. And if I might be allowed to express in one sentence the principles which I think ought to guide an English Minister, I would adopt the expression of Canning, and say that with every British Minister the interests of England ought to be the shibboleth of his policy.”

Yet many of us are old enough to remember a time of great public excitement when, in the language held by opposition speakers and writers, Ministers of the Crown and representatives of the country abroad were denounced for the importance they attached to “ British interests,” as if there were something particularly mean-spirited and selfish in their guardianship of those special interests which it was their duty to protect.<sup>1</sup>

The sanguine and buoyant temperament of Mr. Gladstone, even in the autumn of 1870, when the power of France had already been overthrown, led him to look forward hopefully to the future enduring peace of the world. If Great Britain did but learn her lesson rightly her influence and example

<sup>1</sup> In 1878 and 1879.



would be the chief factors in restoring the Golden Age. Her insular position rendered her safe against aggression. "Even against the great Napoleon" the twenty miles of sea "had proved an impregnable fortification." Maritime supremacy even more than in the past had "become the proud—perhaps the indefectible inheritance of England." As an aggressive military power on the Continent we should never be formidable—"we are an essentially, incurably, maritime power." So far Halifax and Gladstone were agreed; but it may be questioned whether the philosophical, keen-eyed, cynical temperament of the elder statesman would have been ready to endorse the glowing sentences in which Gladstone went on to describe his anticipations of the happy future in store for his country and the world. Gladstone's hopes were founded largely on moral considerations. In the past we had been possessed by a craving for mere material extension. But this we had outlived, as well as those fits of feverish excitement which used to beset us "lest other nations should do for themselves a fiftieth part of what we had done for ourselves." At home we were happy and prosperous, and the old reproach of Irish grievances could no longer be flung in the face of the sister island; (for the Church had been disestablished and a Land Act had done justice between landlords and tenants). It was thus the natural destiny of Great Britain to become "the appropriate object of the general confidence as the sole comparatively unsuspected power." We should be courted by the nations as a disinterested friend and as a useful mediator to avert the quarrels and pacify the rivalries of others. In order to secure this great position one thing was needful:—

"We should do as we would be done by. We should seek to found a moral empire upon the confidence of the nations, not upon their fears, their passions or their antipathies. Certain it is that a new law of nations is gradually taking hold of the mind, and aiming to sway the practice of the world, a law which recognises independence, which frowns upon aggression, which favours the pacific rule, which aims at permanent not temporary adjustments; above all, which recognises as a tribunal of paramount authority the general judgment of civilised mankind."

No British statesman ever had nobler ideals than Mr. Gladstone, and it is impossible to doubt that the influence he wielded for so long over the thoughts of his countrymen tended greatly to raise the moral tone of English political life. At the same time the vehemence of his feelings, swayed by the circumstances of the hour, particularly in his later life, blinded him to facts which it would have been painful to him to recognise ; and whilst this may not diminish our admiration for the grandeur of his moral character it certainly at the time shook men's confidence in his political guidance. Practical men must take the world as it is and make the best of it. Perhaps Irishmen ought to have felt that all Irish grievances were for ever put an end to by Mr. Gladstone's legislative measures of 1869 and 1870. But as a matter of fact, they didn't. So also it would have been better, as it certainly would have been pleasanter, had the European nations regarded this country as the disinterested friend of them all with no ambitions or ends of its own to satisfy or seek. But again, as a matter of fact, unfortunately they didn't.

"Facts are chiels which winna ding  
And downa be disputed."

Neither in 1870 nor in 1914 were Ireland and Europe everything we should have liked them to be ; and at the present day it is perhaps more essential than ever that a statesman should see things as they really are, and build upon facts, rather than indulge in Utopian dreams of a future in which men and nations have forgotten their old natures and bid a final adieu to the ambitions and passions which once influenced them.

The last quarter of a century of his life, whether he contemplated home politics or foreign, must surely have convinced Mr. Gladstone that in 1870 he had been more sanguine than the facts warranted. Europe continued restless and suspicious. Beyond the confines of Europe he felt compelled to send various expeditions, and on more than one occasion he made immediate preparations for war against a great European Power. Every British Government professed

with truth to desire peace, though doubtless some Governments and some Ministers were more zealous for it than others—Government and Opposition, as might be expected in our party system, often differing as to the reality and greatness of danger which seemed to threaten, and as to the best means of guarding against it.

At different times the quarter from which danger threatened has varied and so have the means to which our statesmen have had recourse to ward it off. It might come from France, it might come from Russia, it might come from Germany. It might be due to a general sense of restlessness in Europe out of which war seemed likely to arise, though as yet the nations were not divided into hostile camps. Our efforts have been addressed, therefore, in accordance with existing conditions to maintain the "Balance of Power" or to invoke the action of the "Concert of Europe," or create "Ententes," and "Alliances," which might in due time ripen into armed coalitions. There have been times also when our statesmen have felt that in the midst of European intrigues and rival national ambitions, an attitude of aloofness on the part of that Power which had no axe of its own to grind, and whose main end was peace, was that most likely to achieve good results. Hence, occasionally and with reason a policy of "splendid isolation" has found favour. Thus in 1896, when Mr. Goschen was moving the largely increased navy estimates of 1896, he seized the occasion to point out that if isolation existed, it was at all events self-imposed. "Speaking of what he knew," he declared that the Government had but to hold up its hand, and British isolation would cease; for there were several groups of Powers very ready to give us a welcome. "Ours was not the isolation of weakness; but was freely chosen so that we might be free to act according to our own view of the circumstances when they arose. We wished to stand out of the log-rolling, the bartering, and the scheming that constituted the foreign policy of some other Governments. But if a blow was aimed at our existence, he did not for a moment believe we should be without allies." The naval estimates were very large, but they were based on the security of our own shores. It was not fair,

he said, to contrast them with the naval estimates of other nations, and leave out of sight the sums they spent on their armies, "because the squadrons we sent to sea were the *corps d'armée* that we placed on our frontiers, as they placed *corps d'armée* upon theirs."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes "*entente*," sometimes "general concert," sometimes "isolation"—all have been the means thought appropriate at different periods to give us security, and maintain, if it be possible, the general peace. Where there exists in truth harmony amongst the great Powers on main questions, and a friendly feeling between them, there will be little difficulty in making minor adjustments, and in preserving the peace. But sometimes the whole difficulty arises from the fact that there is no concert, but rather discord amongst the great Powers themselves. So with *ententes* and alliances—of the greatest benefit when the nations are genuinely seeking the same objects, and can trust each other; but not otherwise, as history has often shown us. The "Balance of Power," was regarded at one time as an almost axiomatic principle in world politics; at another as an antiquated superstition responsible for endless controversy and war.

At the present time, what is known as the principle of nationality is thought to hold the key for the solution of all the difficulties of Europe. And where nationality is well-defined and coherent it is highly desirable that political arrangements should be founded upon it. But in extensive regions of the Continent these conditions are absent. Races and religions are often inextricably mixed. Does Poland mean the lands occupied mainly or in very large part by Poles? Or are the boundaries of the revived nation to be drawn with regard to the boundaries of the ancient kingdom? A glance at the ethnographical map presented in Lord Eversley's interesting and useful book<sup>2</sup> shows that a permanent settling of the Polish question will not be easily arrived at. What is to be done with Hungary? What with Bohemia? The whole Balkan Peninsula is seething with racial and religious animosities which no political mark-

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Goschen," Vol. II., p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> "The Partition of Poland," by Lord Eversley, 1915.

ings of the map can effectually allay. How about Italy and the Southern Slavs? Amateur diplomatists in the Press are ready with their advice; and their aspirations and intentions sometimes deserve respect. But the European or World Congress which is to resettle Europe will not have before it a blank sheet of paper upon which it will be able to paint a new political map to please itself. What it *can* do, it will quickly recognise to be of even greater importance than what it wishes to do, and it will have to base its arrangements, if they are to have any permanency at all, with some regard to the very practical considerations of the ability and power existing to enforce them.



## CHAPTER II

### RELATIONS WITH GERMANY IN THE PAST

WHEN we consider and compare the relations that used to exist between Great Britain and Germany, and between Great Britain and other nations on the Continent of Europe, it is evident that in this country till a few years ago there was no sort of general popular feeling of animosity against the Germans. Moreover, it would have been directly contrary not only to popular sentiments but also to the policy and hopes of British statesmanship to aim at any weakening, still less of course the overthrow, of German power; for this would have meant the advance of the military autocrat of all the Russias to the primacy of Europe. Historically, British and Germans had been friends for generations. They had stood shoulder to shoulder in the final struggle that had saved Europe from the military tyranny of Napoleon. Their cause had been the same; and by both nations Wellington and Blücher (old Marshal Vorwärts) were regarded as twin heroes who together in the final struggle had overthrown the enslaver of the Continent.

Since Waterloo we had had but one war—that with Russia in 1854-55; but with France as well as with Russia relations had now and again been so much strained that we had seemed to be on the very brink of conflict; supplies had been voted, reserves called out, and the navy held in readiness; but happily in every case peace had been preserved. With Germany, though of course diplomatic differences had at times arisen, disputes had never been carried to this length. The events of 1863-64, undoubtedly for a time cooled the warmth of our friendship. That was more than half a century ago, and it is beyond dispute that since then till within the last ten years the thought of war between the two nations would have been repellent to the solid and steady portion of the British community and utterly inconsistent with the general aims of British policy.

The intimate relations that had existed for generations between our royal family and the royal and princely houses of Germany were evidence of the enduring character of the sentiments and political sympathies which had prevailed for centuries between the British and German branches of the Teutonic race.

An unambitious and purely defensive foreign policy, and the determination not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, were as we have seen leading principles held by all parties in the State. The safety of the British islands and of our great self-governing colonies beyond the seas was assured so long as British Governments and Parliaments were faithful to their trust in maintaining an invincible navy. A glance at the map, however, the history of the past, and a consciousness of changed conditions in recent times, combined to maintain and even increase British anxieties as to the security of that great dependency, whose safety it was not within the power of the British Fleet entirely to guarantee. India alone of the British Dominions was vulnerable to land attack. Russia was the only power from which an attack could come, and her constant advance nearer and nearer to the British frontier in spite of the persistent remonstrances of our Foreign Office disturbed the repose of our statesmen, both in India and at home.

The anticipation of a land attack upon India was no new thing. It existed long before Russia had become a dominant Power in Central Asia. A descent upon India had been the dream of Napoleon when he found himself powerless to invade and conquer Great Britain in her island home—to march his legions eastward like a second Alexander, to raise by intrigue against his hated enemies Oriental fanaticism, to establish over India the military rule which was already dominating great part of Europe, and so at last to accomplish the destruction of the one nation whom hitherto he had entirely failed to break or to bend.

The belief in these schemes of the great leader of armies, victorious over Europe, weighed on the thoughts of the British statesmen who in Napoleonic days were concerned with the government of India. Dreams of French invasion

were finally dissipated by Napoleon's fall at Waterloo. It was not from France but from Russia that for the future danger to British dominion in India was to be apprehended. The acquisition of territory and the development of railways during the nineteenth century had beyond all question enormously increased the authority and power of the Czar throughout the whole of Asia. The Czar's Ministers became well aware of it, and on more than one occasion showed that they understood how to make use of their new advantages in the jarring rivalries and politics of the Cabinets of Europe. The danger to be apprehended in Asia from the gigantic military power of Russia was accepted by both political parties, and by the British public, as axiomatic. Lord Salisbury might at one time deprecate exaggerated alarm, and advise his countrymen to study Oriental geography on a large scale map ; and the Duke of Argyll at another might ridicule the dread of Russian advance in Central Asia as " Mervousness " <sup>1</sup> ; but for all that the great fact of the vulnerability of the British Empire by Russia through India was universally recognised, and soldiers and statesmen both, during many years, employed their thoughts on the best methods of repelling the attempt at invasion which they regarded as (sooner or later) almost certain to come about. There had been many differences of opinion as to the best means of securing the Indian frontier, and these had been to some extent a subject of party controversy. There had been differences between Gladstone and Disraeli in the light in which they regarded the growth of Russian power in Europe and Asia ; differences which at one time went far to divide our political parties at home. But after all, as regards the fundamental objects of British policy there was as usual much agreement. " Security for the Empire " (this time principally for our Indian Empire) was the great object. And it was under Mr. Gladstone's Government that Russian advance in Central Asia (witness Penjdeh) most nearly brought the two nations into actual conflict. The problem was how to make safe the Indian frontier, against a danger which, rightly or wrongly, all men

<sup>1</sup> In allusion to the Russian advance in Central Asia to Merve.

took for granted. Statesmen at home and in India and military experts pondered these questions and gave their advice—men like Lord Roberts, Sir Charles Dilke, and in more recent times Lord Kitchener, not to mention many others of hardly less authority had anxiously investigated the whole subject. Should invasion have actually come, it could not truthfully have been said that it came to statesmen, soldiers, and public as a surprise.

Our relations with France were unfortunately not rendered permanently harmonious by the fall of the first Napoleon. On many occasions in the last hundred years they have been seriously strained, and more than once almost to breaking point. It would serve no good purpose to recall old and dead controversies, and it may be remembered with some satisfaction that the two nations who in the eyes of our ancestors were "natural enemies" have for a whole century abstained from actual conflict, and that on the only two occasions since Waterloo when the British have declared war against a European Power, viz., in 1854 and 1914, French and English armies have stood side by side against a common foe. Unfortunately there were many parts of the world where French and British interests seemed to conflict, and where dangerous susceptibilities were aroused. In the last thirty or forty years the Suez Canal, Cyprus, Egypt, Burmah, Tunis, Madagascar, West Africa, have been the occasion of controversies which it required on both sides patience and good temper to allay. The whole course of our history for the last century leads us to protest with Lord Palmerston against the theory of "natural enemies," though it must of course be admitted that situations, circumstances, rivalries do make occasions for controversy much more frequently with some nations than with others. As a matter of fact our sharpest controversies were almost always with France or with Russia, the direct interests of Germany and Great Britain coming much more rarely in conflict.

Between Austria and Great Britain in the nineteenth century there was a great lack of sympathy, owing very largely to the part the former had played in Italy, and to the generally retrograde policy of her statesmen. The spirit of Metter-



nich might long have passed from her counsels ; but though in 1880 Mr. Gladstone rightly apologised for the depreciatory and wounding character of the language he had used about that Power in the heat of his electoral contest in Midlothian when "in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility," the feeling to which he had given expression was deeply ingrained in the British people—viz., that it was vain to expect from Vienna sympathy or assistance in those causes which appealed to them, and which were likely to divide nations and imperil the peace of Europe.

Thus, till quite recent years, Englishmen whilst remembering the statesman's caution as to the perpetuity of national friendships and animosities, might reasonably have looked forward to a long continuation of the old friendship between their own country and Germany. The circumstances and conditions that in the relations between Great Britain and Russia, and between Great Britain and France, were constantly giving rise to rivalries, disputes, "pin pricks," and crises of greater or less acuteness, hardly existed between Great Britain and Germany. Moreover, it is in the British nature to believe much in precedent, and not only in legal and constitutional matters. What had not happened in the past was exceedingly unlikely to happen in the future. The Germans and the British had never been at war, or rather, speaking more accurately, British and German armies had never come into actual conflict. What, then, was there till the last few years to make Englishmen seriously contemplate and prepare for a German war ?

In 1863-64 when Prussia and Austria declared war against Denmark, British feeling ran strongly against the aggressors and in favour of the weaker nation. In the policy of the two Powers, especially of Prussia under the guidance of the unscrupulous Bismarck, the cloven hoof had appeared. Would it have been right and wise for Great Britain to have forbidden this aggression at the risk, or rather the certainty, of war ? We had offered to France to join us in an intervention, which would either have succeeded in maintaining European peace, or have involved the joint military and naval action of France and Great Britain as allies in defence of



Denmark against the two Central Powers of Europe. Napoleon III. declined our overtures—not the least of the political errors committed by that unfortunate monarch. The mistake, therefore, if it was one, of non-interference, was far greater on the part of France than on that of England. Moreover, the question of how far it would have then been right for us to act alone was not such a simple one as it may seem to those who live half a century later. The Schleswig-Holstein question was a very complicated one; but there is no doubt that the Danes had been encouraged, far more, be it said, by the language of English newspapers than by that of responsible English statesmen, to rely on our support. And when the whole subject came to be debated in Parliament and the Press, whilst there was much criticism, as to the conduct of negotiations, the language of despatches, and so forth, it was found that there were no statesmen and very few newspapers who would make themselves responsible for advising militant action. There is always something a little unreal in the conduct of a Parliamentary Opposition when its leaders, however fierce their criticism, show themselves unwilling to become responsible for advising the only alternative policy to that of the Government they are assailing. At all events, a much truer estimate can be formed of the trend of substantial British opinion in this and in many other cases by pondering the speeches and the conduct of responsible men on both sides in the two Houses of Parliament than can be gained from the day to day articles, comments and letters in the newspapers of the time. In 1864 the British nation, whatever may have been the language of a portion of the Press, did not as a matter of fact intend to go to war single-handed with Germany, and the long peace between the two nations remained unbroken.

Half a dozen years later, after Prussia had overthrown Austria, came that Franco-German war which was to reconstitute political Europe on new lines. On its outbreak, and during the first months of the war, British feeling on the whole ran strongly with Germany. At the present day, considering our increased knowledge of the transactions of the year 1870, and our own more recent experience of the

character and aims of German world-policy, it is not easy for Englishmen to do justice to the views that governed our action, and on the whole rightly governed it, in those momentous years. The France of Napoleon III. and the North German Confederation have been replaced by a French Republic and German Empire, each inspired by different ideals and ambitions from those of its predecessor, and under different influences. In France Napoleonism is no more, whilst Germany instead of being a people in arms, as it believed, for a great cause, has lost itself in the mere military ideals of its army. The citizen has become merged in the professional soldier. The State has itself been organised as an army, commanded as an army, governed as an army, instead of being led and directed by statesmen. Even science, literature, learning, religion have lost their old spirit of independence, and bowed their heads before the great idol of military glory and world conquest. The fall of Napoleonism should have been a lesson not for France only, but for the whole world. It is one that Germany has not learnt ; or has forgotten, and will have painfully to re-learn ; for the world will not tolerate the subserviency of civilisation and of right to the power of the sword.

“That spell upon the minds of men  
Breaks never to unite again  
That led them to adore  
Those Pagod things of sabre sway,  
With front of brass and feet of clay.”

When the Franco-German war broke out the prevailing belief in England was that victory would fall to the French. As is usual at such periods of political emotion, newspapers and their correspondents in all the recklessness of irresponsibility added to the excitement. The third Napoleon was about to re-establish the fame and glory of France. Russia and Austria in the Crimea and at Sadowa had already been humiliated. When Prussia fell, then would come the turn of England. The defeat of the Allies of 1815 would then be complete, Leipsig and Waterloo avenged, and a Napoleon at last permanently seated on the Imperial throne of France, the military dictator of Europe. It is also thoroughly *en*

*régle* at such times that the public should be told how easily and simply all the terrible troubles that war was bringing on the world might have been avoided had only the British Foreign Office and Cabinet possessed the smallest modicum of courage and commonsense. Nor was this confident and easy criticism entirely confined to the anonymous Press.

One of the ablest of our diplomatists, the late Sir Robert Morier, a hater of Bismarck, but who believed nevertheless in the possibility of a consolidated liberal and peaceful Germany, was at that time British Minister at Darmstadt. "We are living" (he writes on August 9th, 1870, to Sir Louis Mallet) "in the wake of such tremendous events that one hardly has the breath to discuss them. It is clear to me from all I see in the English papers that as usual we are wholly unable to see the real *portée* of the gigantic crisis in the world's affairs being at present fought out on the bloody plains the other side of the mountains which we see from our drawing-room windows. We go on pottering over the question as to who it was suggested the Draft Treaty,<sup>1</sup> and such like pettifogging questions now wholly irrelevant. We seem to be quite ingorant that the war is being fought out between *Germany* and France, not between Bismarck and Napoleon, and we are apparently unable to think of anything except Belgium and ourselves. The idea seems to be that after an indecisive battle Napoleon and Bismarck will shake hands, and the former will take Belgium and the latter Holland, and that we shall then with 25,000 men step in and fight them both! A nice look out! Oh the fools, the fools! Cannot they see that Germany *must* beat France, that forty millions of Teutons sending forth the whole of their *citizen* manhood must beat an army of Pretorian Guards? Can they one moment believe that *Germany* (mind you, not Bismarck and not Prussia) would trample on the public conscience of Europe by giving away Belgium to the foe they had conquered. Do they not see that it is Germany that is with its best blood defending the integrity of Belgium whilst we are

<sup>1</sup> The proposed arrangement between Bismarck and Benedetti divulged in July, 1870, under which in certain eventualities Belgium was to fall to France in return for her recognition of Prussian acquisitions.

making speeches at the Mansion House? Can they not for one moment realise what the real issues at stake are? France draws the sword to assert her political preponderance over Europe. Germany draws the sword to assert her national existence. But the result will be that the preponderance of Germany over Europe for centuries to come will take the place of French preponderance. We sit by like a bloated Quaker, too holy to fight, but rubbing our hands at the roaring trade we are driving in cartridges and ammunition. We are heaping up to ourselves the undying hatred of this German race that will henceforth rule the world because we cannot muster up courage to prevent a few cursed Brummagem manufacturers from driving their unholy trade.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Sir Robert Morier it was the fault of our Foreign Office and Ministry that there was any war of 1870 at all! Every one, he declared, who had the slightest knowledge of continental politics during the previous fifteen years knew as a positive fact that Louis Napoleon would never face a coalition between England and Germany. When the Hohenzollern candidate had been withdrawn, and twenty-four hours’ indecision in Paris followed as to the next step to be taken, *then* was the time to whisper in Napoleon’s ear that Germany and England stood together. For the moment, but for the moment only, the peace party in France were in the ascendant. “One straw would have turned the scale—one whisper to the effect that we would not remain passive and would not tolerate a European war, after having ourselves removed the only conceivable pretext for one, would have sufficed to make war impossible—but the word remained unwhispered.”<sup>2</sup>

In Morier’s eyes the Napoleonic Empire was a huge imposture and he welcomed its fall, whilst he had as little respect or admiration for Bismarck as he had for Napoleon. But like many, perhaps most, Englishmen of that day, he thought well of the German people and indulged high hopes of their future. The *Rechtsgefühl* of that great nation would, he

<sup>1</sup> “Memoirs of Sir R. Morier,” Vol. II., p. 164.

<sup>2</sup> See account of dinner at Marlborough House, July 15th, 1870, in letter to Earl Russell, November 7th, 1870. “Sir R. Morier’s Memoirs,” Vol. II.



thought, render impossible the unscrupulous projects and violent methods of Prussian statesmanship. He felt that in the interest of Germany herself the growing demand for the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine was greatly to be deprecated; and at that time there were German statesmen who held the same view.<sup>1</sup> The merging of Prussia in a bigger and nobler Germany led by men of higher aspirations and more liberal tendencies than belonged to the statesmanship of Berlin, was in the high hopes of those days about to mark a step forward in the civilisation of Europe, and to open a new era of peace and progress for the world.

It was not long before much disillusionment came to the most sanguine of the sympathisers with Germany. The war scare of 1875 showed Bismarck, Moltke and the military party apparently bent on another war with France. Bismarck wanted it in order to get out of internal difficulties, especially with the Catholics. Moltke and the soldiers demanded it on scientific principles of warfare, viz., to strike at the moment when there appeared to be the best chance of destroying a probable or possible enemy. Morier confessed "that he had never dreamt that within three years after the conclusion of peace between France and Germany a fresh danger to civilisation from the renewal of war would be directly traceable to Germany's having learnt and exaggerated the besetting vice of the people she had conquered. For there is no denying that the malady under which Europe is at present suffering is caused by German Chauvinism, a new and far more formidable type of the disease than the French, because instead of being spasmodical and undisciplined, it is methodical, calculating, cold-blooded, and self-contained."

In short, Germany had been Prussianised. And the moral conscience of that great nation to which the brilliant if sometimes impatient and injudicious Morier had looked forward with hopefulness, was dumb under the sway of an unscrupulous statesman allied for the time being with the ambitious

<sup>1</sup> The Crown Prince and even Bismarck disliked the annexation, but the views of the soldiers and the vehement desires of the people were too strong to be resisted.



militarism of Prussia. Europe, however, was shocked ; and as Lord Derby, then at the Foreign Office, pointed out to Russia : " it could not be the interest of Russia to have France destroyed and Germany omnipotent. . . . Even in England, notwithstanding the sympathy felt in the main for the Protestant German Empire, the outrageous injustice of picking a quarrel with France, because she does not choose to remain disarmed, would produce its effect." Great Britain and Russia drew rapidly towards each other. Bismarck, it is known, had a holy horror of finding himself confronted by a European coalition, and accordingly throughout his life he showed much energy in disturbing the friendly relations between other nations. And there were besides at that time other influences which helped to defeat the nefarious projects of the German Chancellor. The Emperor William did not desire war, and his son, brilliant soldier though he was, loved peace ; whilst the personal appeals of Queen Victoria to the former helped to weigh the scales in favour of the maintenance of European concord. Historically the " European Scare " of 1875 is mainly of importance as a comment upon the events of 1870-71, and as a disclosure of the objects and ambitions of certain sections of the German public, which if ever they should gain complete ascendancy boded much future mischief to the world.

The position of neutrality successfully maintained by Great Britain in the Franco-German War (after provision had been made for guarding the inviolability of Belgium) however wise and right it may have been, left us on the conclusion of European peace equally unpopular with both combatants. France was irritated by our not coming to her rescue, and Germany by the rapid change of British sympathies to the side of France, caused by her great disasters and the harsh terms of peace imposed by the victors.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " I find it difficult," wrote Lord Arthur Russell to Morier in January, 1871, " in the universal change that has taken place around me, to maintain the independence of my mind, and like all spectators, my thoughts are obscured by sorrow at the ill-treatment and devastation of France, of which I do not see the end. The change in England is very remarkable, and the German cause has few friends left ; and the massacre of French peasants, the increasing cruelty of the Germans, the destruction of the French pro-

Russia seized the opportunity of the temporary elimination from the councils of Europe of the effective power of France to denounce the Black Sea provisions of the Peace of 1856—an illustration of the inefficacy of the general law of Europe, when an end had been made of every vestige of “balance” amongst the great Powers. With France non-existent, the great military empires of Germany and Russia in alliance became supreme on the Continent. But in 1875 Bismarck overshot the mark, and as has been seen, in great measure owing to British pressure, Russia threw her weight on to the side of peace and of France.

The next quarter of a century (1875–1900) saw remarkable and frequent changes in the relations towards each other of the great Powers of the world. Great Britain as heretofore had no ambitious foreign policy, and her Ministers, whether drawn from the Liberal or Conservative party, were according to their lights striving to maintain the security of the Empire and the peace of the world. In France political events and the successive moods of the public mind can best be understood from the letters written by Lord Lyons, ambassador in Paris, to his chiefs at the Foreign Office between 1870 and 1889, published in Lord Newton’s valuable and interesting volumes. “After the peace of 1871,” writes the ambassador, (September 26th, 1876) to Lord Derby, “rage and mortification produced a wild and unreasoning cry for revenge. This was followed by a depression almost amounting to despair. In this state of things the rumours of an intended attack by Germany in 1875 produced nearly a panic. Since that time hope and confidence have gradually returned. The general sentiment now is that France is safely biding her time.”

Yet for the next thirty years there was little indication in the mutual relations of the great nations that in the next

party and capital, have completely turned the sympathies of the great majority of Englishmen. . . . Ought I, with the rest of England, to change my sympathies in this war, since it has ceased to be a war of defence to become a war of conquest carried on with relentless and increasing barbarity? Ought I to pray now that no Germans may escape alive into Germany again with all good people here? I have not changed outwardly yet; I still defend the German cause, though somewhat feebly, and I feel the influence of surrounding opinion waxing daily higher—that is why I have written to you.”

world-war Great Britain, France, Russia, and Italy were to be associated in one of the most intimate alliances ever known against the combined power of Germany, Austria and Turkey. Who could have foreseen that Japan would join such a coalition, becoming therefore the ally of Russia, against whom Bulgaria was to range herself on the side of Turkey? It would be a great mistake to seek as a main factor of the kaleidoscopic changes in European politics during those years any strong Anglo-German rivalry and jealousy, still less any general sentiment of active national hostility between British and German statesmen and people. There was no racial antagonism between us such as the feeling that ranged against each other Slav and Teuton; there was nothing in our past history to give rise to a spirit of "*revanche*," such as the events of 1870 and 1871 had naturally given birth to in France.

Throughout almost the whole of this period it was with Russia that British interests and sentiment seemed to jar;—on several occasions the differences between the two countries becoming acute, and war apparently trembling in the balance. It was the policy of Bismarck to foster where he could misunderstanding and disagreement between the Foreign Offices of those nations. Whether after 1875 Bismarck wished it or not (probably he did not), he always contemplated a renewal of war with France, sooner or later, as much more than possible. He once said he could hardly sleep at night for thinking of his country becoming engaged at once east and west in a deadly struggle with France and Russia combined. He knew something also of the power of England. He might grumble and growl and give endless trouble to all the Embassies and Legations in Europe; but a rupture with England his strong sense taught him to avoid. He never forgot that the two great wars in which under his auspices his country had been victorious were in the nature of duels with single nations; after the peace of 1871 it was moreover with him a fixed belief that war whenever and however it might arise between Germany and Russia would mean a war against France and Russia combined. Having regard to a country situated as is Germany—marching on every side with great military empires—Bismarck's uneasiness is easily

understood. For him isolation had no splendours. He would meet a combination of enemies by a coalition of friends. He did not want, indeed he greatly deprecated, war with Russia. War with England was hardly thinkable, though he did not love her sovereign, her Ministers, or her people, or the political principles which, in his eyes, they represented. With difficulty he induced the Kaiser in 1879 to enter into a private defensive alliance with Austria against Russia. His concern with the politics of the Balkan peoples was secondary ; but as to Austria and Russia, their future and fate in his eyes were of the first importance. It was not till a much later day that any one in Germany took the slightest interest in the Turks. Whilst Bismarck ruled, the military party would never have been allowed to steer Germany, though aided by Austria, into an aggressive war against the most formidable coalition the world has ever witnessed. When in 1890 Bismarck fell, he may justly have felt that at all events his twofold policy, by which he had endeavoured to secure Germany against foreign war, had been accomplished. The Triple Alliance—Germany, Austria, Italy—had been his work. Russia, France, Great Britain were thinking far more of the differences that divided them than of the danger that in future years was perforce to unite them against Central Europe. He had united his friends, and favoured, or at least seen with much satisfaction, the simmering of discordant sentiment amongst his probable or possible foes.

In the latter part of last century there sprang up amongst the nations on the Continent of Europe a craving for the possession of colonies beyond the seas. They had seen and perhaps envied the prosperity of Greater Britain. Why should not the Governments of France, of Germany, of Italy, follow British example and build up for themselves great communities of Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, who should retain their citizenship, cherish their allegiance to the flag, and so add to the strength and importance of the Old Country? This, indeed, was not the way in which British colonisation had been effected. Our World Empire was not the result of political design. Amongst us, colonies had grown out of the necessities, the adventurous spirit, the trading impulses



of private citizens amongst a people, whose very nature it was, living on the seashore, to look beyond the seas. Our preponderant naval power enabled us to safeguard the rising communities, and occasionally to add to the Empire, after a successful war, the colonies of other nations unable to protect them. About the new Continental colonisation by our European rivals there was little in the nature of self-growth. Home policy and Government administration were to take its place.

Bismarck, always pre-occupied by the thought of impending danger from the hostility of France, was at first not at all attracted by the prospect of German expansion outside Europe, whilst he distinctly approved of French ambition turning to the acquisition of distant lands instead of brooding over the territory she had lost nearer home. Besides, French colonisation, he thought, was bound to impinge unpleasantly on British interests and rouse British susceptibilities. It would be all gain to Germany if such jarrings as he knew well how to utilise between England and Russia sprang up between England and France. When we think of Tunis, of Fashoda, of Tonquin, of West Africa, it is impossible to dismiss Bismarck's unamiable imaginings as totally devoid of sound sense however malevolent they may have been.

Neither British statesmen nor the British public showed, for a very long time at least, much uneasiness or jealousy at the prospect of a colonising Germany. "If foreign nations," said Mr. Chamberlain in 1885, "are determined to pursue distant foreign enterprises we have no right to prevent them." Mr. Gladstone, as was his wont, expressed his thought at greater length and with more solemnity. "If Germany is to become a colonising Power, all I can say is, God speed her. She becomes our ally and partner in the execution of the great purposes of Providence for the advantage of mankind."

It has been generally and rightly accounted one of the peaceful triumphs of Lord Salisbury that the partition of Africa under which Germany acquired an enormous territory was accomplished without setting Europe by the ears. Most unfortunately France had long been suffering from what Lord



Newton truly describes as a fit of "Anglo-phobia from 1883 to 1885." The fit, however, with few lucid intervals, began a good deal earlier and continued a good deal later than those dates. Disraeli's purchase of the Suez Canal shares in 1874 gave terrible offence, and the Anglo-Turkish Convention and the acquisition of Cyprus in 1879 were considered as additional blows aimed at France. The British occupation of Egypt and her growing influence in that country were bitterly, and as it seems to Englishmen, most unreasonably resented. It mattered little which party was in office—Gladstone or Salisbury. The despatches of Lord Lyons show on the part of Ministry after Ministry in Paris the same desire to create difficulty with England. What in the world, asks Lord Rosebery of the ambassador in 1886, on first becoming Foreign Secretary, is the cause of the animus shown against us. "What does it all mean? . . . Were these difficulties made when the late Government was in office? Are they directed against the new administration? I cannot view them as a chapter of accidents. I entered upon office with the most sincere wish to be friendly with France. There can be no earthly reason why we should not be so. It is a pity, therefore, that our cordiality should be poisoned at its source." There was no dislike whatever on the part of the French Ministry, replied Lord Lyons, to the new administration of Mr. Gladstone. If anything they preferred it to Lord Salisbury's; but contact with French interests all over the world, he pointed out, was constantly giving rise to unpleasantness in greater or less degree, whilst French feeling was in a chronic state of uneasiness about Egypt. When relations between Great Britain and Russia were strained, and the *Entente* between Russia and France became more and more intimate, it behoved our statesmen to be on their guard. Lord Rosebery spoke for his countrymen when he said he wished to be friendly with France. But that did not then mean in English eyes hostility to Germany. What England wanted, Liberals and Conservatives alike, was the maintenance of European peace, and due security for British interests. In Mr. Gladstone's second administration, he and Lord Derby, and in his third administration, he and Lord

Rosebery, do what they would, found it impossible to soothe the susceptibilities of France, even though for part of the time Bismarck was making himself unpleasant to England, and a fierce anti-British campaign raged in the German Press.

Lord Fitzmaurice has usefully called attention in a single paragraph of his "Life of Lord Granville," to the similar experiences of our Foreign Office under different Ministries throughout the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, observing that "the foreign policy of Lord Salisbury, who succeeded Lord Granville, and with the exception of the brief and troubled existence of the third and fourth administration of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery, controlled the policy of Great Britain abroad without interruption from 1885 to 1900, passed through exactly the same phases as that of his predecessor. Encouraged in 1886 by the existence of a friendly Ministry in France, he, like Lord Granville, began by attempting a *rapprochement* with France, and in order to gain her goodwill even went so far as to negotiate a treaty with the Porte for the evacuation of Egypt. But Lord Salisbury, like Lord Granville, soon discovered that the susceptibilities of France in regard to Egypt were by no means yet allayed, and that the ephemeral character of French Ministries still presented a hopeless obstacle to any continuity of policy on their part. If the French Assembly hurled a Ministry from office in 1882, when it was proposed to accept the invitation of the British Government to co-operate in regard to the Suez Canal, the French Government itself pursued an equally suicidal policy in 1886, when it met the proposals of the Drummond Wolff Convention for the evacuation of Egypt with determined hostility. Soon after the fall of the third administration of Mr. Gladstone, Lord Salisbury, once more installed in power, recognised the necessity of an *Entente* with Germany, and for many years to come the position of Great Britain in Egypt had to depend on the goodwill of the Triple Alliance, and of Germany in particular, which in that alliance held the prerogative vote." <sup>1</sup>

Prince Bismarck, whose earlier leanings had been decidedly

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Lord Granville," by Lord Fitzmaurice, Vol. II.

against the policy of founding a German Empire beyond the seas, as a policy unsuitable to a purely military State, had become converted. May be, finding German sentiment in that direction too strong to be resisted, he felt that it became his part to act on the great democratic principle that he who would be a leader must know how to follow. In the "Life of Lord Granville" the jealousy, the ill-will, and the duplicity of the German Foreign Office in its dealings with us in many parts of the world—West Africa, East Africa, New Guinea—are vigorously described. The German Foreign Office *was* Bismarck, and the personal feelings of animosity and rancour against individual English statesmen, such as Mr. Gladstone, Lord Granville and Lord Derby, added not a little to the genuine dislike he felt for British principles, British institutions, British blue books, and British ways generally.

In March, 1885, the Penjdeh incident had brought Russia and Great Britain to the brink of war. Party feeling ran high in England, and it was only in the face of much political vituperation that the pacific policy of the Gladstone Government prevailed. Had Ministers not been strong enough to withstand the "clamours of the streets and newspapers at that time, when we had no friends on the Continent, a great European War must have taken place."<sup>1</sup> A generation has passed away, and no one to-day would blame Lord Granville for making the very slight concessions that were sufficient to maintain the all-important peaceful relations between the British and Russian Empires.

During the Unionist Government formed by Lord Salisbury in 1895, which under him and Mr. Balfour was to last for ten years, difficulties arose both with France and Russia that might easily have led a less peace-loving Ministry into war. Between the two political parties and their leaders there was as usual as regards foreign politics no real difference of principle. It was on the statement as regards the Valley of the Nile made by Sir Edward Grey in the previous year that Lord Salisbury founded his request to the French to withdraw from Fashoda, and Lord Rosebery, with his usual patriotism, at once assured the Prime Minister of the support

<sup>1</sup> Lord Fitzmaurice.

of the Opposition in such measures as he might find necessary to strengthen his hands. The two countries were within an ace of war; and the French withdrawal from the Nile Valley, which prevented a rupture, unfortunately left behind it bitter memories, thereby promoting an ever closer and closer alliance between France and Russia, whose ambitions in the Far East and the methods by which they were advanced were causing much anxiety to British statesmen. Mr. Chamberlain, then at the Colonial Office, found the French in West Africa as difficult to deal with, as Lord Salisbury found the Russians on the coasts of China, where Germany also, if acquisitions were to be made by others, was determined as a World Power to put in a vigorous claim. Lord Salisbury's objects were—the abiding ones of all British policy—peace and the security of British interests, and in the then temper of France and Russia he did what he could and with success to promote a good understanding between this country and Germany.

It is as well to recall these things when German statesmen and German newspapers would have the world believe that the motive power of British policy which brought about the great war has been a deep feeling of hatred and jealousy towards Germany, and a desire to combine with France and Russia to accomplish her ruin. Indeed, in the long rule of Lord Salisbury, the more excitable portion of the British Press was at times greatly dissatisfied with the mild protests made by our Government against Russian encroachments and French "pin pricks." We had been humiliated, it was declared, by the first at Port Arthur, and treated with contempt by the second in West Africa, and a more spirited foreign policy was loudly demanded. But Lord Salisbury went his way without blustering and with little speech-making, keeping before his eyes, not merely the specific point of trouble at the moment, but also the larger aspect of world politics. Throughout the service estimates, especially the navy estimates, steadily grew—the barometer was falling. Lord George Hamilton at the Admiralty had propounded the "Two Power Standard." Mr. Goschen had followed energetically on the same lines. But in the "nineties" France



and Russia, not Germany and Austria, were the Powers about whom Englishmen were thinking and against whom they were building. In the last two years of the century the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain, gave expression, in no very diplomatic language, to the keen resentment felt by many of his countrymen at the disingenuousness and irritating conduct, as they thought it, of these two nations. Indeed, he went further and advocated a grand alliance between Great Britain, the United States, and Germany, with whom our interests appeared to be identical. The Kaiser at that time was on good terms with this country; but the course of events was not long in proving that a grand world-wide Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic combination had been but a fond thing vainly imagined. The real danger to the peace of the world and the independence of Europe began to disclose itself as the twentieth century progressed.

The telegram of the Kaiser to President Kruger congratulating him on the failure of the Jameson Raid, all connection with which on the part of the British Government having already, be it said, been disavowed by Mr. Chamberlain, gave rise to the first strong manifestation in England of anti-German feeling. A worse blunder in diplomacy was never made than the gratuitous interference of Germany in the affairs of South Africa. When, however, the war with the Boer Republics came, the personal influence of the Kaiser in favour of European peace did much to check the efforts then undoubtedly being made to form a coalition of great Powers hostile to Great Britain. At the opening of the twentieth century we were without an effective friend in Europe. The management by the British Government of its quarrel with President Kruger may not have been skilful; and it was certainly unfortunate, and perhaps it was hardly surprising that British policy and aims should have been grossly misrepresented all over the Continent. In the United States alone was justice done to the difficulties with which we were met, and to the necessity ultimately imposed upon us of a recourse to arms. Elsewhere, especially in Germany and France, enthusiasm for the Boers ran high, and the Kaiser suffered a great loss of popularity through-



out his Empire by maintaining friendly relations with England.

What were in truth the political objects of the Kaiser himself, what were his inmost wishes and hopes at that time and down to July, 1913, cannot be certainly known till private papers come to light ; but there is no doubt that a very powerful section of public opinion in Germany was already looking to war with England as desirable, as soon as conditions offered a reasonable prospect of success. The military party, which in Germany is much more than " a party," held this view. So did many of their statesmen. Others in all classes earnestly desired peace. But even these last, if they became convinced that " war was inevitable," and was to be forced upon them by the enemies of Germany, would certainly approve of their Government's choosing the right moment to strike, and to be first in the field.

Prince von Bülow, at that time the most powerful man in Germany, after the Kaiser, has very frankly told the world why it was that no advantage was taken of the apparently excellent opportunity afforded by the Boer War of combining with the other European nations in the attempt to overthrow, in fact to destroy, the British Empire. It seems he has felt it incumbent upon him to excuse himself against the charge of having committed a blunder of that kind. It is as well to quote the actual words of Prince von Bülow from the new edition (1916) of " Imperial Germany " (p. 30).

" During the Boer War, which strained the forces of the British Empire to the uttermost, and led England into great difficulties, there seemed to be an opportunity of dealing the secret opponent of our World Policy a shrewd blow. As in the rest of Europe, enthusiasm for the Boers ran high in Germany. Had the Government undertaken to put a spoke in England's wheel, it would have been sure of popular approval. To many it seemed that the European situation was favourable to a momentary success against England, and that French assistance was assured. But there was only a seeming community of interest against England in Europe, and any eventual success against England in the Boer ques-

tion would have had no real value for us. An attempt to proceed to action at the bidding of the pro-Boer feelings of that time would soon have had a sobering effect. Among the French the deeply-rooted national hatred against the German Empire would speedily and completely have ousted the momentary ill-feeling against England, as soon as we had definitely committed ourselves to a hostile course ; and a fundamental change in French policy would immediately have come within the range of practical politics. However painful the memory of the then recent events at Fashoda might be to French pride it could not suffice to turn the scale against the memory of Sedan. The Egyptian Soudan and the White Nile had not driven the thoughts of Metz and Strasbourg from the hearts of the French. There was great danger that we should be thrust forward against England by France, who at the psychological moment would refuse her aid. As in Schiller's beautiful poem, ' Die Ideale,' our companions would have vanished midway. But even if by taking action in Europe we had succeeded in thwarting England's South African policy, our immediate national interests would not have benefited thereby. From that moment onwards for many a long day our relations with England would have been poisoned. England's passive resistance to the World Policy of new Germany would have been changed to very active hostility. During those years we were occupied in founding our sea power by building the German Navy, and even in the event of defeat in the South African War, it was possible for England to stifle our sea power in the embryo. Our neutral attitude in the Boer War had its origin in weighty considerations of the national interests of the German Empire. Our navy was not yet strong enough for us forcibly to achieve a sufficient sea power in the teeth of English interests."

The Kaiser himself maintained an attitude of neutrality, and even of friendliness towards England during these critical years. He declined to see Kruger when the latter, during the Boer War, came to Germany hoping for his assistance ; and when the war was over he gave no recognition to the Boer leaders when they visited Berlin. But after the explanations of his Imperial Chancellor, it would be folly

to attribute to goodwill and friendly feeling behaviour manifestly due to a well grounded respect for the superior power (for the time being) of the British Fleet.

In this unpromising state of affairs the Unionist Government, now approaching its end, set itself steadily to work to remove if possible those causes of irritation and friction with other Powers which were greatly endangering European peace. There were several specific matters in more or less constant dispute between Great Britain and France concerning their outlying interests as "World Powers" (to use the modern phrase). There was the partition of Africa, especially West Africa, there was Egypt and the upper waters of the Nile; there were questions about Siam, about Madagascar, about the New Hebrides, and about the Newfoundland Fisheries. Lord Salisbury throughout his career had always leaned strongly towards a conciliatory foreign policy, when this was possible without the sacrifice of national honour or material interests. A resolute and successful effort was now made to tackle the whole group of questions, and Lord Lansdowne deserves the highest credit for having before the end of 1904 brought them to satisfactory settlement. Especially useful were the arrangements made regarding Egypt and Morocco, which not only allayed French susceptibilities, but proved to be the first real step towards a better understanding and more cordial relations between the two nations.

The General Election of the following year brought in its train great changes; but the course of our national foreign policy was not deflected. In February, 1906, the Unionist Party fell after nearly twenty years of power, interrupted only by the short and sickly life (without power) of the Second Home Rule Ministry of 1892-95. Sir Edward Grey's accession to the Foreign Office and his continued rule there for more than ten years will, in history, stand out as marking one of the most remarkable chapters of foreign policy in our country's annals. To the historian of the future it may seem strange that the fall of the one party, and the victory of the other party, should have been totally disconnected with the great issue that had so long divided them. The Liberals

were wise enough in 1906 to say almost nothing about Home Rule, and accordingly in the next Parliament the subject was shelved. Official Unionist candidates at the General Election thought only of Tariff Reform, or Protection, involving import duties on corn, and on much else of great importance to the trade and industry of the country. As a matter of course disruption in the Unionist ranks followed. Their opponents also gained support from the many Liberal adherents of the Union who had been offended by the recent domestic legislation of the Unionist Government, and who felt that circumstances no longer justified them in subordinating everything, as they had done during the Home Rule crisis, to the one great end of preserving the unity of the United Kingdom. It must, besides, be remembered that at the General Election in 1895 Lord Salisbury, the Duke of Devonshire, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, Lord Goschen, Lord George Hamilton, Sir Henry James and other statesmen, standing very high in the confidence and respect of the whole country, had led the Unionist Party, and in 1906 did so no longer. In the latter year the Unionist Party under the old name were led in favour of a different policy (and largely by different men) from that for which ten years before the country had declared. Party names stand for much in politics, but not for everything. Still, when all the circumstances are taken into account the transfer of considerably over 200 seats in Great Britain from the one party to the other remains a very remarkable phenomenon, and one that might be expected to entail important consequences.

In the hands of Lord Salisbury, of Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne our foreign affairs had been prudently and successfully managed. Would they be equally safe in those of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey? On the main lines of our foreign policy there has been, as has been seen, in recent times little difference between the responsible statesmen of our two great parties; but amongst many of their followers—the extremists on either side—there has been no such agreement. On the one side are ranged all the “Jingoes,” blatant Imperialists, and fire-eaters generally, who if they had had their way would



rarely have left the country at peace. On the other side range themselves all the "pacifists," "little Englanders," cranks, and honest well-meaning dreamers, who not only dislike war (like the rest of the world), but who appear to disbelieve in it, and who accordingly are ready almost to disband our army and to reduce our navy to exiguous proportions. To "the tail" of his own party Lord Salisbury's efforts for peace were not much more welcome than was the firmness of Sir Edward Grey to the liking of some Liberal extremists in manfully accepting at a later date the stern necessity of war. Nevertheless Lord Salisbury and Sir Edward—the one for peace and the other for war—had at his back the bulk both of his own party and the nation.

"The policy of no State in the world," says Prince von Bülow, "is so firmly bound by tradition as that of England, and it is in no small degree to the unbroken continuity of her Foreign Policy, handed down from century to century, pursuing its aims on definite lines, independent of the change of party government that England has attained such magnificent successes in world politics. The British Empire, which is three times the size of Europe, embraces at the present day a fifth part of the globe and a quarter of all mankind. The alpha and omega of English policy has always been the attainment and maintenance of English naval supremacy. To this aim all other considerations, friendships as well as enmities, have always been subordinated. For the attainment of this one object of English policy, Englishmen have at no time scrupled to use all the means at their disposal. This war proves it anew."

It is now twelve years since the great upheaval of political parties at the General Election of January, 1906, placed the Liberals, as Free Traders, in power. In many directions the country might reasonably have looked forward to continuous progressive reform on old Liberal lines. In every direction there was practical work that required doing, and the time seemed not unpropitious for doing it. Ireland, owing largely to the far-reaching land measures, and to the firm administration of the law by their predecessors, was prosperous and quiet. For the first time for many years



Great Britain had sent to the House of Commons a Liberal majority independent of the Irish Nationalists. Home Rule had not been before the country at the dissolution, and little was heard of it, for the time, on either side of the Irish Channel. Protection had been defeated. Abroad also, the outlook was encouraging. Peace had been made in South Africa, and Lord Lansdowne's success in improving our relations with France seemed to promise an end to that general ill-will of the European Powers towards us which for several years had threatened alike our security and the peace of the world. What reason was there to suppose that constructive constitutional reform was beyond the powers of modern Liberal statesmanship? Might not then sanguine Liberals (and Liberals are of little use unless they are sanguine) reasonably expect once more to see a period of "peace, retrenchment, and reform"? Why should not their leaders, treading in the steps of their political ancestry of 1832, give us amongst other things a reformed Second Chamber, suited to the requirements and political principles of the twentieth century, as Grey and Russell and Althorpe had done as regards the First Chamber in the nineteenth century?

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Government began well. By wise trust in the efficacy of colonial self-government they did much to promote good feeling between recently disaffected South Africans and the Mother Country. Whilst as regards our foreign relations Sir Edward Grey not only followed Lord Lansdowne's policy of promoting friendship with France, but entered on a similar course as regards Russia, successfully attempting to substitute a friendly footing for the hitherto very frequently strained terms on which we had stood with the Government of the Czar. These attempts on the part of the new Ministry were no more moved by a feeling of hostility towards Germany than had been those of Lord Lansdowne on the part of the preceding one. The scheme of forming a combination of Powers to act aggressively against Germany did not enter into the heads of Ministers, Conservative or Radical. Lord Salisbury and his colleagues had been on the best of terms with that country, as had been manifested in many ways by the arrangements

made in Africa, and in the cession of Heligoland, for which Germany had long been hankering, but which Lord Granville had declined seriously to entertain. The Liberal party is in general even more averse from the very idea of war than are its political opponents; and it has often been unfair in attributing, when in opposition, any rupture of peaceful relations that might occur to the evil dispositions and not merely to the bad management of Conservative Ministers. Neither Liberals themselves nor the general public ever dreamed that the accession to power of a great Liberal majority would render European peace less secure, or bring about an armed coalition to fight Germany. When war came it was perhaps fortunate for the practical unanimity of the nation that the Liberal party was in power.

Sir Edward Grey was no sooner in office than he set about establishing improved relations with Russia, just as his predecessor Lord Lansdowne had worked, and with much success, to render more amicable our relations with France. At the Algiers Conference no traces were visible of those sentiments and suspicions that in former days had rendered friendly and frank co-operation between the Russians and ourselves difficult or impossible. In the rivalries and troubles of the "Nearer East" we no longer considered ourselves primarily interested. Conditions had changed since the days of Palmerston and Beaconsfield, when we were the principal protector, and aspired to be the reformer, of the Turk. The Balkan States had become powerful nations, by no means the mere puppets of Russian power. The overthrow of the armies of the Czar by the Japanese had resounded through Asia. And the Russian Empire itself, men hoped, was steadily moving from the personal absolutism of a Czarism, founded on autocracy and an ambitious militarism, towards an enlightened constitutionalism. Such a change could not be accomplished in a day. But the power already acquired by representative assemblies and a free press seemed to promise a steady development of free institutions. In the Balkan Peninsula as elsewhere Great Britain was of course interested in the maintenance of peace; for it was evident enough that war amongst the States south of the Danube

might very probably bring Austria and Russia into the field ; and since by treaty Germany was bound to Austria, and France to Russia, even a small flame might and probably would become a European conflagration to which it was impossible to set any limitation.

In these circumstances were our old difficulties with Russia to prevent a frank understanding between the two nations, and even an attempt to tackle amicably and beforehand those questions where differences were likely to arise ? Sir Edward Grey thought not, and to his persistency in refusing to allow minor matters to diminish cordiality between the two Governments our country has owed much. Accordingly the then ticklish subjects—Thibet, the control of the tribes subject to the Amir of Afghanistan, and Persia—were discussed, and a treaty concluded in 1907. In this treaty we did not get everything our own way, and as to the provisions dealing with Persia in particular there was abundant and vigorous criticism. Still nothing better is shown to have been possible or workable. Whilst Sir Edward Grey was accused at home of giving way on every point to Russia, M. Sazonoff, the Russian Foreign Minister, was charged with yielding too much to the British. In fact both nations gained to a degree quite incalculable from the substitution of an *Entente*—a joint determination if possible to agree—for that old state of mutual suspicion, verging on strained relations, which had so long prevailed.

The labours of Lord Lansdowne and of Sir Edward Grey had rendered feasible that great alliance against an aggressive Germany in 1914, without which it would have been impossible to defend the Continent of Europe from military subjection.

The labours of those statesmen, and of the ministries they represented, were not, it must be repeated, directed by sentiments of hostility against Germany, with which nation they wished to remain friendly. This has been proved up to the hilt. Each Government had been carrying out not a *Party*, but a *National*, policy ; and when the military and criminal aggression of the Central Powers took place in August, 1914, it was due to their exertions that Europe did not quail and fall before the premeditated blows of its would-be conquerors.

## CHAPTER III

### GROWTH OF ILL-FEELING BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY

THUS the accession to power in 1906 of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's Government was soon seen to have inaugurated no new foreign policy, and Sir Edward Grey at once began to pursue with great success the course entered upon by Lord Lansdowne in removing the causes of irritation and the mutual suspicions that had for so long prevented a friendly and enduring feeling growing up between Great Britain and France in the West, and between Great Britain and Russia in the East. Indeed, a very few years sufficed to show that in what are known as Imperial interests—that is in foreign, colonial, and Indian affairs—the Liberal Government was acting wisely and firmly. From this true statesmanship the country, and in time the Empire when the crisis came, were to reap a rich reward. It is to be regretted that in domestic policy, especially in their unhappy attempts to reform the Parliamentary Constitution, in the recklessness of their finance, and above all in their Irish policy, which at last brought the country to the brink of civil war, the new Government, though it may have retained the support of its own party caucuses and press, failed egregiously to satisfy the strong common sense of the bulk of the nation.

The reputation of a Government depends on its conduct of the national affairs as a whole. Different regions of political activity cannot, so far as the credit of Government is concerned, be kept in separate watertight compartments. And it can hardly be denied that long before July, 1914, the general prestige of Mr. Asquith's Ministry was not standing high either with Englishmen at home or foreigners abroad—a fact by no means negligible in the European imbroglio of that time. Yet Sir Edward Grey's foreign policy had been



hitherto eminently successful, and had been the main factor in the preservation of the peace of Europe. But times were in all probability about to change, and foreign governments, friendly and the reverse, might well speculate as to whether or not the British Government, unfortunate in the management of its domestic affairs, were it to show its teeth abroad, would have behind it the hearty backing of the nation and Empire.

During these years the relations of amity that had on the whole prevailed between the Governments of Great Britain and Germany were generally but steadily weakening. Long before 1906, however, there had been in Germany a formidable party, and many influential individuals, who made no secret of their jealousy and hatred of British power, and of their intention when the right moment came to destroy it and substitute a world power of their own. To do this they rightly reasoned that it would be necessary first to destroy the supremacy of the British Fleet. Were that once accomplished Germany, already by far the mightiest military Power of the Continent, would dominate the seas as well as the land and there would henceforth be no limit, and hardly indeed any check, to her ambitions.

These "Imperialist Jingo," to employ the party slang of our own country, were not, of course, the whole of the German people. There were sensible and moderate men in all ranks, and amongst the middle and commercial classes especially there were many whose wishes and interests were strongly opposed to war with Great Britain, and who did not share the almost insane hatred of England by which Prussian militarism was inspired. Our English "Jingoes" may have said and written very foolish things, at times tending to mischief; but they were very mild men indeed when compared with the swaggering politicians—generals and admirals, statesmen and professors—who fanned the flames of German Imperialism. The wilder and more militant politicians in England made some noise, especially by reckless writings in the Press and in magazines, and were probably considered in Germany far more representative of British feeling than was really the case. At home we know that they did not include amongst them a responsible



statesman, perhaps hardly a Member of Parliament who counted; and they were few in number. With us the militants constituted far less than a party; in Germany they constituted very much more than a party. Even there, however, there was for a time something of a peace party; but when matters became critical it proved to have little power, and ultimately the war party wielded the whole power of the State. Amongst those who in this country were honourably distinguished in their efforts to produce a better understanding between the moderate men of the two countries, Sir John Lubbock and Sir Henry Roscoe were conspicuous, and their recently published "Lives" show the existence in Germany of men who would have liked to meet those efforts half way.<sup>1</sup>

Amongst Continental nations there was nothing new, nor, after all, very surprising, in the jealousy with which the expansion of the British Empire over a large portion of the globe was regarded. Germany was late in entering the field of colonial rivalry. With a rapidly growing population whose qualifications for making good colonists had been shown under foreign flags, the desire very naturally sprang up in Germany to have and develop possessions of its own beyond the seas, where German citizens might thrive and multiply, retaining their old allegiance whilst adding to the power and prosperity of the Fatherland. After the German fashion, this movement was much less due to popular instinct and initiative than to official guidance and direction from the heads of the State.

As we have already seen, neither Mr. Gladstone, nor Lord Salisbury nor Mr. Chamberlain looked in any narrow and grudging spirit on this new development of German enterprise. The French and the Italians in recent years had added very largely to the extent of their dominions. Russia practically was always extending. Why should not the Germans desire to do the same? So thought and spoke responsible British statesmanship; and the peaceful partitioning of Africa amongst the great Powers, with the

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Sir John Lubbock," by Horace G. Hutcheson. Macmillan, 1914. "Life of Sir Henry Roscoe." 1915.

approval and great assistance of Lord Salisbury, had given the world much reason to hope that jealousy and quarrelling over the boundaries of newly acquired colonies would henceforth be avoided. The South African War, however, resulting in the annexation of the Boer Republics, had made us for the time exceedingly unpopular in Europe, an unpopularity which was increased by the somewhat blatant Imperialism then too common in certain quarters in England. Few statesmen belonging to any party indulged in foolish language of this kind. They might, perhaps, have done more to dissociate themselves from it. Abroad Germans, and not Germans only, asked themselves when British annexations would come to an end. "Was the whole world to be painted red?"

In sober truth our own countrymen, for many generations past, issuing from our two little islands in the North Atlantic Ocean, have done more to spread their dominion over the earth than all the other European races put together. In one hemisphere, whilst North America is completely theirs, South America has admittedly fallen within the "sphere of influence" of the United States, by virtue of the general acceptance of the "Monroe Doctrine," which warns off all other nations from interesting themselves in the concerns of the vast continent that stretches from the Gulf of Mexico to Cape Horn. Great Britain's acquisitions in North America, in Asia, Australasia and Africa, and islands in every sea need not be recapitulated. Unless the stream of things should alter its course the future of the world seems to lie with Anglo-Saxondom, neither the Teuton, nor the Latin races, nor the Slavs, nor the yellow races, having before them anything approaching to such a prospect of extended power. To speculate on the future of the whole world is, however, mere guessing; but it is as well for present purposes to remember these things, and to lay our account with a little touchiness and envy which they may possibly evoke amongst our less successful or less fortunate neighbours.

We cannot, therefore, with a serious countenance blame Germany, or any other nation, for a desire to extend its dominions or its influence. American citizens value the

Monroe Doctrine, for, if they can get it recognised, it gives their nation power. And it is useless to deny that Anglo-Saxondom likes world power. In the early forties of last century the white population of the island Continent of Australia, for the most part dotted along the coast, hardly exceeded that of many a modern English city. A representative of the French Government called at the Colonial Office in those days to inquire as to how much of Australia was claimed by Great Britain. "The whole of it," replied Lord John Russell, "and with that answer his questioner went away."<sup>1</sup> "Quite right, too!" says every Englishman, "how much possible trouble may not that explicit language have saved his countrymen?" Yes! But the effect of these American and British declarations and actions was to close the *whole* of one hemisphere from the North Pole to the South Pole, and in the other the whole of the Continent of Australia, against occupation by any other European nation. "A good thing, too," say all Anglo-Saxons again with one voice, on both sides of the Atlantic and in every continent. Yes! But it is too much to ask all the rest of the world with equal enthusiasm to say the same!

In these circumstances the suspicion with which foreign statesmen, not German statesmen only, habitually regard the action of our Foreign Office and Colonial Office is not unintelligible. There is nothing more absolutely certain in history than that British statesmen, to whatever party they belonged, were averse from the policy of adding Egypt to the British dominions. An armed permanent occupation of that country, whilst it would increase our responsibilities, would not add to our power. So at least they thought, whilst at the same time they recognised that our interests in the East would not allow us to suffer anarchy in Egypt, or permit the subjection of that country to any of the great military Powers of Europe. The views of the Gladstone Government of 1880 under which the Egyptian occupation began were shared by the Government which followed it. For long years every one hoped that a self-dependent Egyptian system would be built up, and that the temporary

<sup>1</sup> "Recollections and Suggestions," by Earl Russell.

British occupation would come to an end. That was the object at which British policy aimed. Nevertheless, a generation before this, the dream of a British Egypt *had* visited the minds of men, and travellers in meditative mood and quite unconnected with politics whilst projecting their thoughts into the future had already seen visions of the prophetic truth of which a later age was to be witness. Warburton,<sup>1</sup> writing in 1844, declares that "every traveller in Egypt capable of conversing with the natives constantly meets the question, 'When are the English coming?' It would be difficult to trace the origin of this popular impression which has certainly not arisen from any vapouring politically or privately on the part of the English." Indeed, at that time Egypt seemed to be completely permeated by Frenchmen and French influences. Kinglake,<sup>2</sup> only a few months later, standing amongst the shadows of Egypt's most ancient monuments, lets his thoughts ramble over past and future. "Upon ancient dynasties . . . upon keen-eyed travellers—Herodotus yesterday, and Warburton to-day—upon all and more—this unworldly Sphinx has watched, and watched like a Providence with the same earnest eyes, and the same sad tragical mien. And we, we shall die, and Islam will wither away; and the Englishman straining far over to hold his loved India, will plant a firm foot on the banks of the Nile, and sit in the seats of the Faithful, and still that sleepless rock will lie watching. . . ."

Whilst then in all fairness recognising that British colonisation and expansion beyond the seas might naturally excite to some degree the suspicions and the envy of rival nations, it deserves notice that, amongst them all, Germany has had *least* cause of jealousy or complaint. No British territorial acquisition has ever been made at her expense, or has in any way threatened her interests. This could hardly be said with regard to France, or Spain, or Holland, or Russia. Neither the purchase of the Suez Canal, nor the taking over of Cyprus, nor the occupation of Egypt ruffled German susceptibilities, whatever offence may have been caused else-

<sup>1</sup> "The Crescent and the Cross."

<sup>2</sup> "Eothen."



where. Moreover, the German Empire itself has been built up out of successful and often most unrighteous and violent acquisitions from other nations. That throughout has been the Prussian way. Beyond the seas it is true that German expansion has been a new development—one not of many generations, but only of a few years. Hitherto her expansion has been at the expense of her neighbours nearer home, by the conquest of flourishing European races as competent to enjoy and utilise independence as herself.

Without colonies, when the Empire was founded in 1871, and for many years afterwards, Germany has in the present generation added immense territories to her dominions. German South West Africa, German East Africa, German New Guinea, the Cameroons, Samoa, were absorbed, and in 1897 Kiao Chau taken possession of, doubtless with a view to future operations at the expense of the Chinese Empire. If Great Britain really was aiming at the restriction of German expansion, she was singularly unsuccessful, and as a matter of fact it was only when her direct interests were threatened that she made any difficulties at all. It was in 1890 that Lord Salisbury had surrendered Heligoland to Germany. Half a dozen years earlier the German ambassador had suggested this step to Lord Granville, saying very frankly that the island would be of much importance when the Kiel Canal had been cut; that the cession would promote good feeling in Germany, and that it was practically impossible, as Count Münster no doubt believed, that the two nations would ever be at war. Lord Granville would have nothing to say to the specious proposal. By the light of later events we must all regret that Lord Salisbury included the cession in his general settlement with Germany in 1890. It demonstrates however the strong desire of our Government to maintain friendly relations with the German people, and its unwillingness to believe in a breach between the two nations, notwithstanding some then recent examples of German pushfulness of which we had had much right to complain.

The first appearance of anything approaching to a general anti-German feeling in this country was caused, as has been



said, by the Kaiser's sympathetic telegram to President Krüger. It is too often forgotten that the unfortunate Jameson Raid had previously been repudiated by the Home Government, and the Kaiser might therefore plausibly say that his action was no affront to Great Britain. That raid was no doubt utterly unjustifiable. But what business was it of the Kaiser's, Englishmen asked? Did it portend German action and interference in the affairs of South Africa? If the Kaiser really meant happy relations and peace with the British Empire, no bigger diplomatic blunder was ever committed. But the message greatly delighted the "Jingoes" of Germany, and increased the popularity of their sovereign. Four years later, during the war with the Boer Republics, these things had not faded from British memories, and when it became known that the Boers were looking to Germany for help, and that German anti-British feeling was excited to a high pitch of enthusiasm, it became impossible not to recognise in this country that that unprecedented and undesired thing—an Anglo-German war—might some day come about. Unfortunately, as the war in the Transvaal dragged on, it appeared that it was not only in Germany that public sentiment was violently anti-English. In Holland this was natural enough. In France, however, the same feeling was very strong, as no Englishman travelling in that country in 1901, or acquainted with the tone of the French Press, could possibly doubt. On the Continent of Europe we stood alone.

This then would surely have been the moment for the Kaiser, if, indeed, he was the arch enemy of British world power, to place himself at the head of the violent anti-British feeling of his subjects, and intervene before the Transvaal war was over. He did nothing of the kind, thereby sacrificing much popularity with his countrymen. As we have seen, he would have nothing to do with President Kruger or the Boer Generals when they came to Berlin to appeal for assistance and sympathy. That the South African troubles did not produce a European conflagration was largely due to the action of the Kaiser.

Should these things be accounted to the Kaiser for

righteousness? Or did he blunderingly lose an opportunity? Or did he craftily calculate that the time had not come?

It is by no means easy to read the true motives, wishes, and hopes of the Kaiser himself during the dozen years that preceded 1914. That he wished to increase the world power of the German Empire is certain; but how far he was influenced by a personal feeling of hostility to the British Empire or desired to see a struggle for supremacy between the two great nations, is another matter. His true nature, character and aims will be better understood in this country a generation or two hence than they possibly can be at the present time. But the Kaiser certainly was too clear seeing and too well informed to be deceived by the popular clap-trap of German anglophobes into believing that Great Britain was conspiring to overthrow Germany when the opportunity came, as a great Power amongst the nations. He at least must have known how little real weight was to be attached to the foolish language occasionally indulged in by irresponsible individuals in England—language which admirably served the turn of the junkers and jingoes of Germany.

There is at any rate no mistaking the feelings of jealousy and hatred by which Count Reventlow, Prince Bülow and Admiral von Tirpitz and others were actuated, whom the Kaiser had chosen as his advisers and friends, before the first great step was taken towards the creation of a gigantic war fleet. Their frankness makes it difficult, if not impossible, to believe in the more peaceful disposition of the sovereign who had called them to his counsels.

As we have already seen it has been admitted, or rather stated in boastful admiration of the far-seeing character of German statesmanship, that the neutrality observed by the Kaiser during the Boer War was due to no friendliness to this country on the part of his Government, or to any desire to avert a European War, but solely to the calculation that in a short time Germany would make war at greater advantage. It was wiser to wait till the German Fleet in power matched that of the British Empire. *Then*, counting on her complete ascendancy over all opposition on both ele-

ments, the German Empire would enter into possession of its own—*i.e.*, would dominate the world. It was a duty, German statesmen and writers very frankly tell us, which Germany owed to herself, to possess not only the most powerful army, superior to that of any of her neighbours, but also, since she now had possessions over sea, and a large commerce, to have at her disposal a fleet sufficient to assure her pre-eminence on the ocean.

Why should Germany desire this enormous fleet? For what purpose was it to be employed? The power of the British Fleet was a condition of British national existence. The safety of Kingdom and Empire depended upon it. We maintained no land force on a scale to contend with the gigantic armies of the great nations of the Continent. Our naval and military policy was, and had been for generations, framed with a view to defence not aggression. The positions of Germany and Great Britain were in these respects and by reason of the facts of the case entirely dissimilar. Prince von Bülow's book shows that the aim and object of *his* naval policy was to wrest from Great Britain that sea power upon which, declining to follow the example of the huge conscript armies of the Continent, she had always relied as her main defence. Germany was successful, he says, in creating before war came a navy "that the strongest enemy would not attack without hesitation;" and, writing in 1916, he finds the proof of this success in the fact that the chief body of the British Fleet remains in the North Sea! No one in England would contend that the German Fleet was of no importance; but that fleet knows well that it owes its preservation to its own prudent resolve to stay at home protected by land defences, and not to any "hesitation" of the enemy to attack it, should it venture upon the high seas. Prince von Bülow is entitled, if any man is, to tell us the true reasons that led the German Empire, eighteen years ago, on the course of shipbuilding in which it has persevered ever since. According to him, writing last year, they were in the main two. The fleet would render secure in case of war German commerce and German colonies beyond the seas. The power of the fleet would make any naval nation (meaning, of course

Great Britain) *hesitate* before opposing the will of the German Empire. Well ! within twenty-four hours of German troops crossing the Belgian frontier in August, 1914, Great Britain had declared war on Germany. Not much "hesitation" there ! Secondly, whilst her great fleet remains in the estuary of the Elbe, German commerce has been entirely swept from the ocean, and every colony, and island, and port occupied by her beyond the seas has fallen before British power. Has ever vaunting ambition met with so complete and rapid a fall, or political scheming ended in so disastrous a failure ?

In 1914, before the war, Prince von Bülow might boast to his countrymen that by their navy they had become able to "resist aggression and to maintain and develop their position everywhere, especially in Asia Minor, the Far East and Africa." But the navy was not needed in 1914 to resist aggression, as no one attacked Germany. War she would have ; and what is her position to-day in Asia Minor, the Far East, and Africa ?

What, however, is really more striking than the bombast is the absence of all morality and of all sense of right and wrong, from these schemings and aspirations of German statesmen and political writers. It is now beyond all dispute that the governing sections of political opinion in Germany had adopted a new ideal of the future world-position of the German Empire. This had taken the place of the old spirit of rivalry with France. European domination and world power were their ends, military and naval preparation the means by which this position was to be won. No scruples would stand in their way ; no efforts would be too great to secure the accomplishment of their purpose ; but they realised that this could hardly be attained till that nation which in the past had preserved the liberties of Europe against the military power of conquerors more formidable than their Kaiser had been dealt with. They recognised fully that others, including the British Empire in order to make way for Germany would of necessity have to "take a back seat" in the world of nations. Till Germany had overthrown that Empire their own could not attain its full



stature. Hence, hatred of the British nation possessed the minds and sentiments of large sections, and unfortunately governing sections, of the German people to a degree which it was difficult to us to understand.

Now what was and what ought to have been the foreign policy of the British nation throughout the years following the pacification of South Africa? The state of things with which Lord Salisbury's administration had had to deal was passing away. It was not, of course, known to his successors, as fully as it is known to all the world to-day, that Germany (that is to say, the German influence that was to count most) was definitely bent, by means of military aggression, on establishing her predominance as a world power over all other nations on land and sea—that she had fully recognised that the chief obstacle in the path of her ambition was the might of the British Empire and had made up her mind to overcome it. Still, enough was known to excite the distrust of British statesmanship, and to change the hitherto friendly feelings of great masses of the British people into sentiments of rapidly increasing suspicion. Their Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, had deservedly won a very high reputation for the calmness of temperament and clearness of purpose which had enabled him through years of much international anxiety to preserve the peace of Europe. At no time has British foreign policy been inspired by higher aims and motives, been more free from every suspicion on the part of other Powers of intrigue, or been less inclined to win spurious fame by playing a showy part on the European stage. It was almost impossible for sincere men to doubt the absolute sincerity of British policy whilst Sir Edward Grey represented the Foreign Office. Imbued, as strongly as any member of his party with Liberal instincts and sympathies, he had yet remained free from the prejudices and superstitions which obscured the vision of some enthusiasts and dreamers and “cranks” on his own side of politics. A statesman has to deal with facts as they are, and with men as they are, and Sir Edward Grey had shown on many occasions long before the crisis of 1914 that he fully realised that in an imperfect world his country could not place implicit

reliance on the doctrines of "Pacifists" or "Little Englanders." We have seen that it was on the basis of his clear statements as to British interests in the Valley of the Nile in the year 1895 that Lord Salisbury founded his protest against French encroachments on the occasion of Marchand's expedition to Fashoda in 1898; and in later days whilst in opposition he had shown that in common with Lord Rosebery, Mr. Asquith, and Mr. Haldane, he recognised the possibility of danger to the State against which it was the duty of any Government, however composed, to take diplomatic, naval and military precautions.

In accordance with modern British traditions Sir Edward Grey's first object was the maintenance of European peace. His growing distrust of Germany did not make him abandon all hope of success. It would, no doubt, have pleased many of his critics better, and given satisfaction to the more noisy and "Jingo" minority of his opponents, had his speeches assumed the form of a running indictment against that nation and prepared the minds of his countrymen for inevitable and early war. On many occasions he might without doubt, had he wished, have made a strong case against the action of the German Government. But in the interest of his own country and of Europe he was *playing for peace*, of which every prospect and chance would have disappeared had that been the attitude of the British Government. And for many years he was successful. Equally conciliatory and firm, he convinced both his own countrymen and foreign nations that the main end he was striving for was European peace. And yet, to anyone who closely followed his speeches, and marked the conduct of the Government, in which he was not only Foreign Secretary, but also a very leading member, it is clear that he was unable to build his hopes of that peace on trust in the pacific intentions of the Kaiser.

When the British Minister found an ever increasing difficulty in improving the relations between Great Britain and Germany by endeavouring to remove their causes of difference as he and Lord Lansdowne before him had been so successful in doing as regards our relations with France and Russia, our *Entente* with the two latter nations necessarily became

closer and closer. Yet assuredly this imported no hostile intent against Germany. Prince von Bülow, writing a few months before the war, himself admits this. "The political leadership of this triple union was at decisive moments mostly in the hands of England. English leadership has sometimes had a soothing and sobering effect on France, and has done good work for the preservation of peace in Europe ;"—a passage that is followed up by the ex-Chancellor's *post war* comment "that the outbreak and course of the world war have shown how ready were the leading circles in England to throw their decisive influence on the policy of the *Entente*, and to direct that influence steadfastly and deliberately against their German rival as soon as they thought that peace could no longer be preserved. The consideration that, if the troublesome German competitor would only disappear from the face of the earth, or at least from world politics, England, according to the dictum of Montaigne, '*que le dommage de l'un est le profit de l'autre*,' could only profit, was a political dogma held by the majority of leading British politicians." This dogma was not one held by those "leading politicians" who formed the Ministry and represented the substantial views of the British people, though some colour may have been given to the ex-Chancellor's view by occasional irresponsible speeches and publications.

Why then did Sir Edward Grey ultimately fail in maintaining friendly relations with Germany? The history of the eight years before the war speaks for itself. Germany *declined* our friendship except on terms which would give her absolute predominance of military power in Europe and expose in a special degree our friend and neighbour the French Republic to aggression and possible overthrow. Once more it is worth while to quote Prince von Bülow to the effect that a friendly alliance would have made Germany the mere "satellite of England" unless she had first established German equality with British naval power. "Germany could not for the sake of England's friendship become dependent upon her. In our development as a sea Power we could not reach our goal either as England's satellite or

her antagonist.<sup>1</sup>” When British supremacy at sea was a thing of the past, and not till then, Germany would be willing to extend the right hand of fellowship on equal terms to the Island State.

In these circumstances it was not likely that the overtures made by Sir Edward Grey and previous British Ministers to limit armaments by agreement between nations would have much success with Germany. As long ago as 1899 the Czar had proposed to the great Powers that they should agree at a General Conference to reduce their armaments both military and naval, and Mr. Goschen, then First Lord of the Admiralty, had undertaken in 1899 to make a reduction in his shipbuilding programme if the other naval nations were prepared to diminish theirs. Nothing came or could come of such attempts whilst an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion prevailed in Europe, and the months following the Hague Conference showed greater expenditure and greater augmentation of the fleets than had ever before been known ; and these were still further increased when a year or two later German ambition turned towards the sovereignty of the seas. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman in 1907, when Prime Minister, publicly advocated the cause of disarmament, and professed his willingness to reduce the British Fleet if other Powers would do the same. Germany would have none of it, refusing absolutely to participate in any such discussion, and the whole subject was therefore excluded from the Hague Conference. On this point the Kaiser and his advisers had made up their minds that it was for the German Government to decide for itself the strength of German armaments.

The truth is that neither before nor since 1907 have the relations of the nations of the world towards each other been such as to make arrangements of this kind possible or even desirable. Amongst nations that profoundly distrusted and suspected each other, who was to guarantee the faithful observance of bargains and arrangements which would evidently become the ground of endless and dangerous disputes ? If the question of naval power of each nation is to

<sup>1</sup> “ Imperial Germany,” p. 29.



be fixed, at what point is the stereotyping of strength to begin? Is the "two Power basis" of Lord George Hamilton and Mr. Goschen to become part of the law of Europe? Every British Ministry has held that a fleet must be maintained superior to that of any probable enemy; but surely no statesman can expect that rival Powers will voluntarily engage to stereotype their own inferiority. In old days what would Holland or France or Spain have said to such a project? Probably much what Germany would say to-day!

Let us look at the matter from our own point of view. The Government are trustees for the safety and security of the British Empire. Would they be doing their duty if they made this safety and security dependent upon the arrangements entered into with other Governments by which our power to defend ourselves was limited? The sufficiency of our naval and military preparations must depend on political considerations that vary from time to time. The great nations of the Continent have come to the conclusion that as regards their armies there should be *no* limit to their size, the whole manhood of the nation constituting the army. In the future as in the past the British Government must remain free to take all such measures as may be needful for our national security unhampered by foreign treaties, and must decline to let that security rest on anything less than whole power of the British Empire.

Now throughout the whole of the very troubled period of European politics, 1906-14, nothing is more remarkable than the steadfast and consistent and on the whole successful manner in which the efforts of Great Britain were directed towards the maintenance of the peace between the great Powers. It is hardly too much to say that during those years the "World Peace" was in the main due to Great Britain and her Foreign Minister. The singleness of aim of Sir Edward Grey was patent to the whole world. Whilst he presided at the Foreign Office no foreign statesman could suspect this country of playing for its own hand a game of selfish ambition, or of intrigue. His cards were on the table. "Secret diplomacy" was not the instrument by which he worked. As the Austrian ambassador said of him, Sir

Edward Grey was not only a man who spoke the truth, he was a man who made other people know that he spoke the truth. His calmness of temperament enabled him to see things as they were—to recognise the existing facts of the situation. His clearness of vision showed him plainly enough from what quarter danger might come. Rightly he did not despair of averting it, whilst he took precautions that, should, in spite of all his efforts, the storm actually burst, his own country and Europe should not be overwhelmed.

This statesman-like calmness of temperament, whenever relations became at all strained or difficult, was, of course, little to the taste of the frothy and excitement-loving journalism of the day. "There are some people," Sir Edward Grey once said, in the House of Commons, "who delight in believing that we are near to war; and the nearer we come to war the greater satisfaction they seem to get out of it. . . . It is really as if in the atmosphere of the world there was some mischievous influence at work, . . . as if the world were indulging in a fit of political alcoholism; and the best that can be done by those of us who are in positions of responsibility is to keep cool and sober."

Throughout all the difficulties arising out of the rivalries of the Powers—the Algeciras Conference, the Morocco troubles, the menacing flourishes of the Kaiser at Tangier and Agadir, the anxious aspect of affairs in Persia, the London Conference of 1911, the Baghdad railway negotiations—the same firmness in paying regard to existing facts and in striving his utmost to maintain the peace of Europe is very conspicuous. And as the years proceeded and the ambitions and ceaseless preparations of Germany became more and more unmistakable, more and more importance came to be attached to the maintenance and strengthening of the Triple *Entente*. In Persia, for instance, only the most careful handling by Sir Edward Grey could have prevented the up-growth of soreness and worse between Russia and Great Britain. In other circumstances and at other times British policy in Persia might have been different. The influence of Russia over Northern Persia had become a fact, which no amount of British buttressing of Persian authority at Teheran

(even were it desirable) could possibly alter, whilst every year that passed added to the supreme importance of avoiding friction arising with Russia. Yet these two governing considerations of a wise British policy were completely ignored in much of the severe and abundant newspaper criticism of the day.

However violent contemporary criticisms might be, the conduct of a British Government that had not availed itself to the utmost of every means of maintaining peaceful relations with Germany would never have been pardoned by Englishmen in after years, or escaped the sternest condemnation of history. The story of Lord Haldane's missions to Germany in 1906 and 1912 has not yet been told in full detail to the public, though enough is now known to enable men to form a judgment on the wisdom of the Cabinet in selecting and despatching Lord Haldane, and on Lord Haldane's conduct in the management of a difficult and dangerous situation.<sup>1</sup> It was his aim on his first visit to convince his hosts that the British *Entente* with France and Russia was in no sense whatever a hostile combination against Germany, with which great country his Government wished to remain friends, whilst they would not on any account be drawn into any engagement or conduct inconsistent with the French *Entente*. At the time, being Secretary of State for War and deeply interested in the reform of our military organisation, he was able most usefully to study German military methods, especially the means of securing rapidity of mobilisation, and at a later date to apply many a lesson learned abroad in the military service of his own country.

"In the light of subsequent events," says Mr. Harold Begbie with truth, "the Germans regard the admirable diplomacy of Lord Haldane as the trick of King Edward's blandest, silkiest, cleverest, and most dishonest trickster, but in honest truth it was nothing of the kind. It was a genuine effort made by a very wise man and a perfectly upright man to save the peace of Europe; and whilst it certainly did enable us to put our house in order and to come to a working understanding with France, it was never intended as a policy

<sup>1</sup> See "The Vindication of Great Britain," by Harold Begbie, 1916.

for gaining time, and never used in after years in the direction of offence."

His second visit—in 1912—was undertaken after the Agadir crisis had severely strained Anglo-German relations, and was the response made by our Government to a desire expressed by the Kaiser that the Cabinets of the two countries should get into closer relations with a view to a better understanding. It would have been impossible to choose a statesman better fitted than Lord Haldane to perform the delicate duty of removing suspicions of British hostility from the minds of the Kaiser and his councillors, whilst at the same time firmly maintaining the solidarity for defensive purposes of the French *Entente*. Lord Haldane's knowledge of Germany, of German literature, and German men of eminence, the friendly personal terms established between the Kaiser and the British statesman on the occasion of the previous visit of the latter to Berlin, and during the visit of the former to England, all pointed to Lord Haldane as of all men the most competent to make the mission a success, if success were possible. He was *persona grata* at the Imperial Court. At the same time he was far too acute to be deceived or misled into words or actions which would throw doubt on the sincerity and thoroughness of the Cabinet and his own policy—that of the Anglo-French *Entente*.

So far as establishing any permanent mutual good feeling between the two nations went and averting European war the mission failed. Why? The German peace party, and a large portion of the German public did not want war. Bethmann Hollweg was Chancellor; and no one doubts the sincerity of his wish for British friendship. At that time the Kaiser had certainly not thrown in his lot with the war party. The militarists had not then won the game. There was still reason for hoping that until they had command of the Government and were officially in power peace would be preserved. But till then it is difficult to see how our Cabinet and Foreign Office could do better than keep on the most friendly terms possible with the German Government. They did not slacken their efforts in making ready for immediate war the naval and military forces of the Crown.



They could not and did not place implicit confidence in the policy of the Kaiser ; but they rightly refused to despair of peace whilst there was any prospect of it. Lord Haldane returned to London with much useful information, but with a considerable feeling of anxiety lest the German war party should override the peaceful aspirations of the Chancellor and of multitudes of right-thinking men in both countries. It was of course desirable that nothing should be said or done in England to aggravate international relations and so render it easier for the militarist section in Germany to gain complete command of the situation.

The great world war at last sprang out of disputes which did not primarily affect the interests of Great Britain or the British Empire. The racial and religious problems, the rivalries and antagonisms that have so long afflicted South-Eastern Europe deeply concerned the interests and aspirations of Austria and Russia, but left the Western Powers unaffected. Accordingly, when relations were broken off between Austria and Servia at the end of July, 1914, Sir Edward Grey as a last resource proposed that the disinterested great Powers, Germany, France, Italy and Great Britain, should keep together and ask Austria and Russia to preserve peace, at least till the four Powers had had an opportunity of finding some solution. It was evident, he said, that other than local issues would soon supersede the disputes between Austria and Servia and " would bring other Powers in, and the war would be the biggest war ever known ; but as long as Germany would work to keep the peace he would keep closely in touch. After the Servian reply it was at Vienna that some moderation must be urged." (To Sir E. Goschen, at Berlin, July 27th, 1914.)

It is in truth beyond all dispute that Great Britain, France and Russia were genuinely and keenly anxious that the Austrian and Servian quarrel should not spread ; and it is certain that Germany had it in her power, by a single word, at Vienna, to preserve the peace of Europe. When indeed the mobilisation of armies had once begun, or was alleged to have begun, it was too late. The distrust and dread with which the Great Powers regarded each other necessitated that

i

n sheer self-defence mobilisation should be met by mobilisation. No nation could afford to run the risk of standing unprepared even for a week in the presence of a fully armed and distrusted neighbour. In such circumstances even men who are peacefully inclined become convinced that "war is inevitable"—a belief itself always the most potent cause of war.

Servia had gone very far towards meeting the peremptory and extravagant demands of Austria and could hardly have gone further if she were still to remain an independent and self-respecting nation. But the predominant popular opinion of Austria-Hungary was running violently against the Slavs, whilst on the other hand neither the Czar nor the Russian people were prepared to tolerate the suppression of Servian or Slav power in the Balkan Peninsula. Should rupture come Slav sympathy would at once drag Russia into the conflict; but there is no evidence to show that she did not strive her hardest to prevent the Austro-Servian breach. With Germany it was very different. That Power at all events was not dragged into a war which broke out against her will. Her authority over Austria was measureless, and had the Kaiser seen fit to fall in with the proposals of Sir Edward Grey, and unite with the great Powers not directly interested in the disputes of the Balkan States, the peace of Europe would have been maintained.

The responsibility for the world war lies entirely upon the two Central Powers of Europe—Germany and Austria, and the bulk of the burden falls, of course, upon Germany as infinitely the more powerful and designing of the two. It is as certain as anything can be that had Germany not willed the war there would have been no European War at all in 1914.

The German myth of a long and deep-rooted hatred of their race by British statesmen and people as the real cause of the war has now been swept away. The privately written memorandum of Prince Lichnowsky, German ambassador in London before the war, quite recently brought to light by a Swedish newspaper, confirms the conclusion already arrived at outside Germany that on Germany alone falls the responsibility for its outbreak. The monstrous charge that the Allies,

with Great Britain at their head, had entered into a conspiracy to throttle Germany, who was thereby forced for her very life into a defensive war, has been probably believed by multitudes of honest Germans. In this country our statesmen and our national policy are too well known for any Englishman to give a moment's credence to so fantastic a tale. The true story requires for us no confirmation from the German ambassador, who adds few new facts to what well informed men already knew. Nevertheless, the story he tells, coming from such a quarter, is of great importance, and can hardly fail sooner or later to lift the veil from the eyes of thousands of the Kaiser's deliberately deluded subjects.

Prince Lichnowsky was at the end of June, 1914, on board the Imperial yacht at Kiel with the Kaiser, and in July he was at Berlin having interviews with the Imperial authorities, and attending at the Foreign Office. He was fresh from England where his personal relations with our principal statesmen had been friendly and intimate. "I said to the Imperial Chancellor that I regarded our foreign relations as very satisfactory, since our relations with England were better than they had been for a very long time past, and I remarked also that a pacifist Ministry was in power in France." The Chancellor did not appear to share the ambassador's satisfaction, and the Foreign Office and Chancellor alike dwelt on their apprehension of an attack from Russia. The ambassador's insistence that "Russia had no interest in attacking Germany, and that such an attack would never obtain the support of England and France since both countries wanted peace" did not alleviate the gloom of their anticipations. "Of course, I was not told that the chief of the General Staff—General von Moltke—was pressing for war"; but he *had* heard that the German ambassador at Vienna had been rebuked for advising moderation there towards Serbia. Prince Lichnowsky had always disliked the policy of the Triple Alliance from the point of view of Germany. He had indeed no ill-will to Austria or Hungary or Italy; but it seemed to him "not a German policy but an Austrian dynastic policy. The Austrians had accustomed themselves to regard the

Alliance as an umbrella under whose protection they could make excursions at pleasure into the East."

It was, however, in the Prince's opinion due far more to the predetermined resolution of the German Imperial authorities than to Austrian obstinacy that the quarrel between Austria and Serbia was not composed. The Kaiser, that is the only possible inference, had made up his mind that the moment for war with Russia had come. In retrospect the ambassador saw more clearly than at the time of his visit to Berlin how things were shaping there and in Vienna, and he felt that he had been kept in the dark. His doubts and suspicions, already awakened, received ample confirmation from his experiences on his return to London for the remaining weeks before the outbreak of war. His instructions were to influence so far as he could British opinion in favour of Austria; but as he had expected would be the case, whilst the newspapers had been friendly enough to the Austrians at the time of the archduke's murder, they held that no exploitation of the crime for political purposes would be justified. When the ultimatum to Serbia came, "the whole world" says the Prince, "except in Berlin and Vienna, understood that it meant war, and world war."

At the last, had Sir Edward Grey's proposals been accepted, the peace would have been kept. Had the ambassadors of France and Germany and Italy met in London under Sir Edward's presidency there would have been little difficulty in adjusting the points in dispute between Austria and Serbia. "Given goodwill everything could have been settled in one or two sittings." Germany would have none of it. "The impression became even stronger," writes the late German ambassador, "that we desired war in all circumstances. Otherwise our attitude in a question, which after all did not directly concern us, is unintelligible." Yet Germany knew well that war with Russia meant war with France; and Prince Lichnowsky had never ceased to warn Berlin that "if it came to war with France Germany would have to reckon with English hostility."

The German ambassador on the outbreak of war left these shores receiving, it is hardly necessary to state, the



customary respectful treatment shown by civilised nations to foreign representatives. "I was treated like a departing sovereign; and so ended my London mission. It was wrecked, not by the perfidy of the British, but by the perfidy of our policy." He had certainly not found in the action of our Foreign Office a trace of that hostility to Germany of which so many of his countrymen complained. In a vigorous passage of comment on recent events the Prince shows that the impressions held by the non-German world may sometimes be shared by enlightened Germans. "Militarism, really a school for the nation and an instrument of policy, makes policy into the instrument of military power, if the patriarchal absolutism of a soldier-kingdom renders possible an attitude which would not be permitted by a democracy which had disengaged itself from military-junker influences."

A memorandum of a Dr. Mühlön, before the war a director of Krupp's works at Essen, published in March, 1918, if the statements are accurately made, gives the world strong reason for believing that the personal action of the Kaiser himself was the principal cause of the outbreak of war and of the failure of Sir Edward Grey's efforts to find a way of peace. "His Northern Cruise had been only a blind." With the Austrian ultimatum to Servia, and the relations between the two States, the Kaiser himself rather than the German Foreign Office had dealt. Russia, no doubt, would wish to befriend the Slav nation; but should Russia mobilise the Kaiser said he would do the same and then there would be immediate war. This time there would be no oscillation, neither would there be any possible ground for accusing him of indecision. And thus, if this narrative is to be accepted, all the efforts were wasted which sought to avert the hideous calamity of a world war, through the personal feeling of the Kaiser for his own dignity and character for consistency, and a desire to stand well with the popular sentiment—with the military and "jingo" section of his subjects.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

THE history of the momentous ten days that elapsed between the Austrian ultimatum to Servia on July 23rd, 1914, and the British declaration of war against Germany on August 4th has been fully told from the point of view of this country in the correspondence laid before Parliament, and in the speeches in the House of Commons of the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. No one can deny that Austria had against Servia ample grounds of complaint. In the dispute between these two Governments Great Britain was not directly interested ; but the presentation of the ultimatum from Austria to Servia, accompanied with a time limit for its acceptance within forty-eight hours, raised at once the whole question of the independence of Servia and the future of the Balkan States. The interests of the Russian Empire and the sentiments of the Russian people became deeply involved, and it was now clear that nothing less than the peace of all Europe was at stake. The Russian Foreign Office at once declared that this step of Austria meant war, and called upon France and Great Britain to assist her, as France was under treaty obligation to do, whilst it remained for Sir Edward Grey, on behalf of Great Britain who retained full freedom of action, to employ once more his great abilities (hitherto conspicuously successful in such work) in the maintenance of the general peace.

Germany held the key of the situation. A word from Berlin to Vienna, spoken in time, would have sufficed. But from that quarter Sir Edward Grey's efforts to extend Austria's time limit received no assistance. Neither would Germany accept his proposal that she and the non-Balkan Powers, viz., France, Italy and Great Britain should co-operate in attempts at the conciliation of Austria and Russia. At

Belgrade, the representatives of Great Britain, France and Russia, were instructed to press Serbia to go as far as possible towards meeting the wishes of Austria. The time limit was not extended, but Serbia, yielding to pressure, replied to the ultimatum by acceding to almost the whole of the Austrian demands.

Now, therefore, it would seem that peace was within easy reach, for a time at least, till the great Powers had been able to talk the whole question over, and agree in proposals of conciliatory measures to Austria and Russia.

Why then, one must persist in asking, did these strenuous efforts of the British Ministry come to naught? In Russia and in France it is clear there was not the slightest desire for war, but on the contrary an earnest hope that peace would be preserved. In Austria it is true that popular feeling was violently excited against the Servians, and that any Ministry would have been swept out of existence had it refused to go to war with Serbia. Had Berlin then allowed matters to go too far in suffering Austria to present an ultimatum which certainly seemed to be *intended* to make war inevitable? And was she dragged unadvisedly and unwillingly into European conflict by the unrestrainable action of her ally? On July 25th Austria declared war on Serbia, and on the following day her troops were attacking Belgrade, and Russia had begun to mobilise. When once mobilisation begins the example must perforce be followed in neighbouring countries for purposes of self-defence. Prospects had become dark enough. But Sir Edward still persisted in his efforts to persuade Germany to join in mediating in one last attempt between the two great jarring Powers.

Actual conflict had as yet, however, not gone further than between Austria and Serbia, when in reply to Sir E. Grey's persistent request for German co-operation in his efforts for peace the Chancellor requested to know what would be the attitude of Great Britain in the event of a general conflagration. Would she promise to Germany her neutrality? If so, Germany would not touch Holland nor annex any of the European territories of France. She might have to invade Belgium, in order to defend herself against French attack ;

but if Belgium made no resistance Germany undertook that no territory should be taken from her. Earlier on that very day Sir Edward had spoken very frankly to the German ambassador in London. "I wished to say in a quite private and friendly way something that was on my mind. The situation was very grave. While it was restricted to the issues at present actually involved we had no thought of interfering in it. But if Germany became involved in it, and then France, the issue might be so great that it would involve all European interests, and I *did not wish him to be misled* by the friendly tone of our conversation, which I hoped would continue, *into thinking we should stand aside*. He said he quite understood this, but he asked whether I meant that we should in certain circumstances intervene? I replied that I did not wish to say that or to use anything that was like a threat or an attempt to apply pressure by saying that if things became worse we should intervene. There would be no question of our intervening if Germany was not involved, or even if France was not involved. But we knew very well that if the issue did become such that we thought British interests required us to intervene, *we must intervene at once*, the decision would have to be very rapid, just as the decisions of other Powers had to be. I hoped that the friendly tone of our conversations would continue as at present, and that I should be able to keep as closely in touch with the German Government in working for peace. But if we failed in our efforts to keep the peace, and if the issue spread so that it involved practically every European interest, I did not wish to be open to any reproach from him that the friendly tone of all our conversations had misled him or his Government into supposing that we should not take action, and to the reproach that if they had not been so misled the course of things might have been different. The German ambassador took no exception to what I had said. Indeed, he told me that it accorded well with what he had already given in Berlin as his view of the situation."<sup>1</sup>

Sir Edward Grey's reply to the German Chancellor's specific request for British neutrality was despatched on

<sup>1</sup> Sir E. Grey to Sir E. Goschen, July 29th, 1914.



July 30th,<sup>1</sup> and was in every way worthy of a British Minister. "His Majesty's Government cannot for a moment entertain the Chancellor's proposal that they should bind themselves to neutrality on such terms." He was in effect, said Sir Edward, asking us to stand by whilst France was beaten and deprived of her colonies, so long as her European territory was not annexed. Without such annexations France might be crushed so as to lose her position as a great Power, and become subordinate to German policy. Hence, he continues: "It would be a disgrace for us to make this bargain with Germany at the expense of France, a disgrace from which the good name of this country would never recover." Neither would he bargain away any obligations as regards the neutrality of Belgium. "We must preserve our full freedom to act as circumstances may seem to us to require in any such unfavourable and regrettable development of the present crisis as the Chancellor contemplated." As to the future he asks the ambassador to impress on the Chancellor that the only way in which Germany and Great Britain can maintain good relations is by continuing to work together for the peace of Europe, and he concludes as follows:—"I can only say this: if the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed, my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, jointly or separately. I have desired this and worked for it, as far as I could, through the last Balkan crisis, and Germany having a corresponding object, our relations sensibly improved. The idea has hitherto been too Utopian to form the subject of definite proposals, but if this present crisis, so much more acute than any that Europe has gone through for generations, be safely passed, I am hopeful that the relief and reaction which will follow may make possible some more definite *rapprochement* between the Powers than has been possible hitherto."

Things were now moving very fast—Austria, Russia,

<sup>1</sup> Sir E. Grey to Sir E. Goschen, British ambassador at Berlin.

Germany mobilising ; no nation (and not without reason) being willing to let a possible or probable enemy get the start of it. Austria actually at war with Servia, Russia on the very verge of war with Austria. France pledged to Russia as an ally, and Germany similarly pledged to Austria ; yet even now Sir Edward Grey did not think the situation altogether hopeless. He felt, however, that the position of Belgium between France and Germany was becoming hourly more critical, and accordingly asked each of these two Powers—guarantors with ourselves of Belgian independence and neutrality—if she would engage to respect that neutrality so long as it was respected by other Powers.<sup>1</sup> On the main dispute between the great Powers he still maintained, for this country, an independent attitude, one which alone seemed to afford some possibility of preserving the general peace. Germany already knew that were she to make the existing European complications a pretext or an excuse for the policy of crushing France, British neutrality would be at end, and that the two great nations of Western Europe would be found standing side by side. At that moment he declined to give a pledge of intervention on her behalf to the French Government, but would take such action as would seem necessary directly any new development in the situation took place.<sup>2</sup>

Developments very rapidly did take place. France had, in answer to our request, at once pledged herself not to violate the neutrality of Belgium. Not so Germany, whose ambassador, on instructions of course from Berlin, seemed to consider her treaty obligations in that respect as something to bargain with—for a consideration. He asked (August 1st) Sir Edward Grey whether if Belgian neutrality were respected he would pledge Great Britain to neutrality in the coming war, a request, of course, answered in the negative. Our hands were still free, Sir Edward urged, and the whole situation was being considered both on the merits, and with regard to public opinion at home, which would be strongly

<sup>1</sup> From Sir E. Grey to British ambassadors in Paris and Berlin, July 31st, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> Sir E. Grey to Sir F. Bertie, July 30th, 1914.

stirred against Germany by the violation of Belgian neutrality. The ambassador then made a still higher bid, suggesting that if only Great Britain would promise her own neutrality Germany might even guarantee to France the integrity of her dominions, both home and colonial. To all of which the British Minister replied as before. He would give no promise of neutrality for the time being, and he was determined to keep his hands free.

Developments rapidly continued, for the following day (August 2nd) Russia and Germany were actually at war, German troops entered the neutral territory of the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, and the British Cabinet definitely assured M. Cambon, the French ambassador in London, that the German Fleet would not be allowed to come into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against the French coasts or shipping. "This assurance," it was specified, "is, of course, subject to the policy of His Majesty's Government receiving the support of Parliament, and must not be taken as binding that Government to take action until the above contingency of action by the German Fleet takes place." On August 3rd the King of the Belgians appealed to Great Britain for her diplomatic intervention to safeguard the integrity of Belgium, and Sir Edward Grey that evening gave to the House of Commons a full narrative of recent events, explaining our relations with France, Germany and Belgium. He spoke with befitting scorn of the notion that we should "stand aside, husband our strength, and whatever happened in the course of this war, intervene at the end of it to put things right, and to adjust them to our own point of view. If, in a crisis like this, we ran away from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian Treaty, he doubted whether, whatever material force we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect we should have lost."

Next morning, in accordance with this firm language, our Foreign Minister telegraphed to Brussels to assure the Belgian Government of British support in resisting all pressure to depart from neutrality, and to inform them that His Majesty's Government would join Russia and France in

repelling German aggression on Belgian territory and maintaining the guarantee of their independence and integrity in future years.

Still, the great Western Powers of Europe had not declared war. Great Britain's attitude was made clear to the whole world. A German attack upon France, or invasion of Belgium, would at once bring into the field the whole power of the British Empire. Would the Kaiser under these circumstances decide for immediate war? German foreign policy is always largely strategical, and Belgium, though her independence was guaranteed by Germany herself, was considered solely from the point of view of the military advantages afforded by that country for a German attack upon France. The immediate question, Peace or War? lay with Germany. What was her action? Most assuredly she did not *wish* the British Empire to be added to the number of her foes. On the other hand she knew that the use of Belgian territory by her armies was *essential* to her whole plan of campaign. Even yet, therefore, she would not quite despair of all hopes of keeping Great Britain out of the conflict. Hence Sir Edward Grey was assured (August 4th) that under "no pretence whatever" would Germany "annex Belgian territory." All she wanted was a free passage for her troops. Her action, it was added, was taken in self-defence against a French attack upon Germany planned across Belgium. "Germany had consequently to disregard Belgian neutrality, it being for her a question of life or death to prevent French advance."

Sir Edward Grey declined to budge an inch from the position he had taken up. Hearing a little later that German troops had actually crossed the Belgian frontier, and that it had been intimated to the Belgian Government that force of arms would be employed to effect their purpose, the British Secretary of State despatched his final telegram to Sir Edward Goschen at Berlin. "In these circumstances and in view of the fact that Germany declined to give the same assurances respecting Belgium as France gave last week in reply to our request made simultaneously at Berlin and Paris, we must repeat that request, and ask that a satis-



factory reply be received here by 12 o'clock to-night. If not, you are instructed to ask for your passports, and to say that His Majesty's Government feel bound to take all steps in their power to uphold the neutrality of Belgium and the observance of a treaty to which Germany is as much a party as themselves."

At midnight on August 4th, 1914, Great Britain and Germany were at war. The rupture between two great nations of kindred race, who in character and national endowments had much in common, who had never yet been enemies, and who looked back with pride to their united struggles and victories in the past in a great cause, was now complete. On our side at least there was no welcoming of war "with a light heart," no blindness to the fact that an era of unnumbered woes was dawning on Europe. The world strife would be on a scale such as the world had not yet known; the slaughter, the devastation and ruin, the destruction of property, greater than the imagination could conceive. The best part of a whole generation of young men of the foremost nations of the earth was to be swept away. Before peace came the face of Europe would be changed, and what the New Europe would be it was not in the power of mortals to foresee.

The duties of a British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs are not easy to perform. He is in almost daily communication with the representatives of other great Powers, and has to exercise judgment and take steps of importance with reference to an ever-changing condition of things very little apprehended by the general public. Even of his colleagues there are probably at most only three or four who keep themselves sufficiently acquainted with details to be able to render very efficient help to the Foreign Minister. In many an almost informal talk between a Minister and a foreign ambassador words have sometimes been let drop, which have been in fact deeds, and have affected the fortunes of States and the future course of history. It is a gigantic error, due to ignorance of what actually takes place, to suppose that the privacy with which for the most part international affairs are discussed between statesmen and

diplomatists, tends to the strain and rupture of friendly relations. It generally tends in the other direction. The contrast is great between the atmosphere of Press and platform and even Parliament, and that subsequently revealed to us in blue books, and memoirs and letters, in which difficult international situations have been debated by responsible statesmen in private. The arena of public discussion is in truth not favourable to the patient and peaceful disposal of international difficulties in times of political tension.

No British statesman ever realised more strongly than Sir Edward Grey the duty of a Minister in these high matters to carry the opinion of the country with him. He and his colleagues were acting on behalf of a self-governing nation. Their authority sprang only from the fact that they enjoyed the confidence of Parliament. They were not the mere agents of a Kaiser or a Czar. They felt that, even should they themselves wish to do so, it would be vain for them to act in advance of, or against, public opinion. It would not be right to commit the nation behind its back to some policy which it had not approved, or to hamper its freedom of action by treaties or arrangements of which it knew nothing. Yet the Minister has often to act at once, if mischief is to be prevented, and if he is a strong man he will sometimes be ready to take risks which possibly even some of his colleagues may be afraid to run. Never to act without express authority previously given would be to sacrifice many an opportunity of averting mischief. Such abstention from the exercise of influence till the opportunity had passed away would be playing into the hands of the mischief makers themselves.

Sir Edward Grey was working on behalf of his own country, and in the true interest also of Europe, to preserve the general peace. That Germany for some time past had been the quarter from which that peace was most likely to be disturbed he recognised. But history will declare that he was right not to abandon his efforts for peace whilst there was a chance of their proving successful.

An example of an important private talk between a

British Minister and a foreign ambassador in circumstances not entirely unlike those of August, 1914, occurred just half a century earlier. There was in England at the time, as has been said, strong sympathy with the Danes in their brave and vain resistance to the Prussians and the Austrians and much satisfaction at a naval success they had just gained over an Austrian fleet near Heligoland. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell, strongly shared the general feeling. Lord Palmerston's letter, dated May 1st, 1864, to his colleague is for several reasons worth giving *in extenso*.

“ MY DEAR RUSSELL,

“ I felt so little satisfied with the decision of the Cabinet on Saturday that I determined to make a notch off my own bat, and accordingly I wrote this morning to Apponyi, asking him to come here and give me half an hour's conversation. He came accordingly. I said I wished to have some friendly and unreserved conversation with him, not as between an English Minister and the Austrian ambassador, but as between Palmerston and Apponyi; that what I was going to say related to serious matters; but I begged that nothing I might say should be looked upon as a threat, but only as a frank explanation between friends on matters which might lead to disagreements, and with regard to which, unless timely explanation were given as to possible consequences of certain things, a reproach might afterwards be made that timely explanation might have avoided disagreeable results. I said that we have from the beginning taken a deep interest in favour of Denmark—not from family ties, which have little influence on English policy, and sometimes act unfavourably; but first that we have thought from the beginning that Denmark has been harshly and unjustly treated; and secondly we deem the integrity and independence of the State which commands the entrance to the Baltic objects of interest to England. That we abstained from taking the field in defence of Denmark for many reasons—from the season of the year; from the smallness of our army, and the great risk of failure in a struggle with all Germany by land.

That with regard to operations by sea, the positions would be reversed : We are strong, Germany is weak ; and the German ports in the Baltic, North Sea, and Adriatic would be greatly at our command.

“ Speaking for myself personally, and for nobody else, I must frankly tell him that if an Austrian squadron were to pass along our coasts and ports, and go into the Baltic to help in any way the German operations against Denmark, I should look upon it as an affront and insult to England. That I could not and would not stand such a thing ; and that unless and in such case a superior British squadron were to follow, with such orders for acting as the case might require, I would not continue to hold my present position ; and such a case would probably lead to collision—that is, war ; and in my opinion Germany and especially Austria would be the sufferer in such a war. I should deeply regret such a result, because it is the wish of England to be friends with Austria ; but I am confident I should be borne out by public opinion. . . .”

The ambassador listened with attention, said that these considerations had already presented themselves to his mind, and that the King of the Belgians amongst others had dwelt upon them. He did not wish to risk either a catastrophe or a humiliation, and he promised that the Austrian Fleet should not enter the Baltic, a promise that Palmerston thought it would be as well to have in writing. The following day Palmerston reported the conversation to the Cabinet, many members of which were by no means inclined to endorse the firm language of the Premier and Foreign Secretary. Much harsher terms of peace, it may be, were ultimately exacted from Denmark than if Great Britain had from the beginning and throughout shown less “ timidity.” At least this was the belief of the two senior statesmen in the Ministry, who felt more unwilling than their younger colleagues to tolerate the lawless and violent conduct of the German Powers, whilst at the same time they had greater faith in the influence that could be brought to bear by their own country owing to her great naval supremacy. But as Palmerston



wrote to Russell, they could not expect always to get their own way. "Able men now fill every Cabinet office, and such men will have opinions, and hold to them; but unfortunately they are too often busy with their own departments to follow up foreign questions so as to be fully masters of them, and their conclusions are generally on the timid side of what might be best."

In 1914, when Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey announced their intention to uphold at all hazards British obligations of honour, to protect Belgium, and to defend France against unprovoked aggression, they had behind them a solid Cabinet, and a Parliament and people more absolutely united than at any previous period of our history. German action towards Belgium made an end of "counsels on the timid side," if any such there had been. Moreover, the Ministry enjoyed the reputation, deservedly, of being a peace-loving Ministry, and the Liberal party included within it practically all those who were peace-at-any-price men, and so-called "Little Englanders." Such a Ministry and such a party were free from all taint of Jingoism, and that blatant Imperialism not rarely exhibited in some of the party organs of their political opponents. This greatly conduced to the absolute unanimity shown throughout every section of opinion and in every part of the country. A Conservative Ministry, through no fault of its own, would have stood in a far less strong position, and the people as a whole would have been less willing to believe that the war on which it was about to enter was a righteous and necessary one. Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey deserve great credit for making clear to every section of British opinion, and to Europe as well, that in these terrible times British policy was founded on the highest principles of public morality and national honour as well as out of regard for the safety of the State. The unexampled unanimity was not a little due to the admirable conduct of the Foreign Office in recent years.

It has often happened that a very strong man, or two or three strong men, in a Cabinet, knowing clearly their own minds, have forced the hands of colleagues less well-informed and less firm of purpose than themselves into taking steps,

that entail consequences and further action by the Government as a whole which it had not yet fully contemplated. Every one who has paid any attention to modern political developments is well aware of the frequency with which on a situation becoming acute many men find to their surprise that their course of action has been already decided by what has been done, and that it is now too late to draw back. In short, Ministers often discover to their dismay that they have been unwittingly committed to proceedings which they had not consciously approved. In the letter quoted above Lord Palmerston shows how difficult it is for Ministers deeply engaged in other departmental work to give adequate attention to the varying phases and details of foreign policy.

Now Sir Edward Grey was the last man who would wish either to force the hands of colleagues or to act behind the back of Parliament<sup>1</sup>; and his very full explanation in the House of Commons of the whole situation of this country and its relation towards the European Powers on August 3rd, 1914, shows how steadfastly and earnestly he had worked to carry with him the consent and approval of colleagues and public. As long ago as the first Morocco crisis in 1906, at the time of the General Election, he had been asked to declare what would be the attitude of this country in case that crisis should develop into war between France and Germany. Should we give armed assistance to France, as the Power with whom we were in agreement on the points then in controversy? "I said, in my opinion, that if war was forced upon France then on the question of Morocco—a question that had just been the subject of agreement between this country and France, an agreement exceedingly popular on both sides—in my view public opinion in this country would have rallied to the material support of France. I gave no promise; but I expressed that opinion during the crisis, as far as I remember, almost in the same words to the French ambassador and the German ambassador at the time. I

<sup>1</sup> The dislike on principle, on the part of Sir Edward Grey, to enter into treaties or make bargains with other nations, without the knowledge and approval of Parliament comes out strongly in the previously quoted memorandum of Prince Lichnowsky.

made no promise and I used no threats ; but I expressed that opinion. That position was accepted by the French Government ; but they said to me at the time, and I think very reasonably, ‘ if you think it possible that the public opinion of Great Britain, should a sudden crisis arise, justify you in giving to France the armed support which you cannot promise in advance, you will not be able to give that support, even if you wish it, when the time comes, unless some conversations have already take place between naval and military experts.’ There was force in that and I agreed to it, and authorised those conversations to take place, but on the distinct understanding that nothing passing between those experts should bind either Government or restrict in any way their freedom to make a decision as to whether or not they would give that support when the time arose.”

In the midst of a General Election it was not easy to hold a Cabinet ; but Sir Edward Grey consulted the Prime Minister—Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman—Mr. Asquith, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Haldane, Secretary of State for War, and they entirely approved the language of the Foreign Secretary. That particular crisis passed away ; and when the second Morocco crisis—the Agadir crisis—arose, Sir Edward Grey used the same language and Mr. Lloyd George, it will be remembered, made a somewhat bellicose speech at the Guildhall. A little later—in 1912—this very important question of our engagements to France was discussed in the Cabinet, under whose authority the following letter was sent by Sir Edward Grey to the French ambassador, who replied in similar terms.

“ *November 22nd, 1912.*

“ MY DEAR AMBASSADOR,

“ From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not and ought not to be regarded as an engagement that

commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not yet arisen and may never arise. The disposition for instance of the French and British Fleets respectively at the present moment is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war. You have, however, pointed out that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could in that event depend upon the armed assistance of the other. I agree that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and if so what measures they should be prepared to take in common."

As a matter of definite obligation relations between France and Great Britain remained in that position till the intimation to Germany, August 2nd, that the German Fleet would not be allowed to put to sea with hostile intention against France; equivalent to a contingent declaration of war. Great Britain had remained till then free to act upon her own view of what was right, of what was her duty, and what the necessities of the case were. The Government, Parliament and the nation were now face to face with all the facts and the whole situation. *How should they act?* The momentous decision could not be delayed. It must be made at once. Grey acted as became a British statesman. He was not one to *dictate* the policy of the nation whose hands he had persistently endeavoured to keep free. It was his business and that of the Government to keep the nation well informed as to the position of affairs, and to lead and guide it with its eyes open along the path that they believed to be the only one of honour and even of safety. It was true, he explained, to the House of Commons, that we were not bound like Russia by Treaty of Alliance to France. We stood entirely apart from that treaty, and did not even know its terms. Nevertheless, "we have had for many years a long-standing friendship with France. I remember well the feel-



ing in the House—and my own feeling—for I spoke on the subject, I think, when the late Government made their agreement with France—the warm and cordial feeling resulting from the fact that these two nations who had had perpetual differences in the past had cleared their differences away ; I remember saying, I think, that it seemed to me some benign influence had been at work to produce the cordial atmosphere that had made that possible. But how far that friendship entails obligation—it has been a friendship between the nations and ratified by the nations—how far that entails an obligation, let every man look into his heart, and his own feelings, and construe the extent of the obligation for himself. I construe it myself as I feel it ; but I do not wish to urge on any one else more than their feelings dictate as to what they should feel about the obligation. The House individually and collectively may judge for itself. I speak my personal view, and I have given the House my own feeling in that matter.” Moreover, as he goes on to say, relying on this good feeling the French had felt themselves able to keep the whole of their fleet in the Mediterranean, therefore leaving their northern and western coasts and their shipping in the Channel and the North Sea undefended. Our own interests were also deeply involved, for in the presence of a European conflagration, remembering our Mediterranean highway and positions, it might be exceedingly serious for us were the French Fleet largely withdrawn at such a time from the south in order to defend French interests elsewhere. In these circumstances Grey had given his assurance to the French ambassador in language closely resembling that of Palmerston to the Austrian ambassador half a century before. “ My own feeling is,” he said in the House of Commons, “ that if a foreign fleet, engaged in a war which France had not sought, and in which she had not been the aggressor, came down the English Channel, and bombarded and battered the undefended coasts of France, we could not stand aside, and see this going on practically within sight of our eyes, with our arms folded, looking on dispassionately, doing nothing ; I believe that would be the feeling of this country. There are times when one feels that if these circumstances

actually did arise, it would be a feeling which would spread with irresistible force throughout the land."

The duties we owe to our neighbours, and the obligations we come under to other nations, do not arise solely from the express contracts we have made or the solemn treaties to which we have been a party. However successfully we may have kept ourselves free from hampering engagements, changing conditions and circumstances and the happening of events often suffice to impose upon us burdens and duties which it would be sheer cowardice and deep disgrace not to shoulder. So felt and spoke Sir Edward Grey. So felt the House of Commons. So felt the British people throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire.

The German invasion of Belgium, undertaken in order to facilitate an immediate attack upon France, at once brought Great Britain into the field. The sacredness of treaties, the defence of the independence of a small nation, the call from France for the assistance of her friend and neighbour against unprovoked attack—all these things combined to render it impossible for Great Britain, with honour or even with regard to her own ultimate safety, to take up a position of neutrality. The whole nation was unanimous for war, and a day or two sufficed to show that the cause so vehemently espoused at Westminster and in Great Britain was not less enthusiastically supported by British subjects all over the world.

Thus the immediate cause of the British declaration of war was our treaty obligation to maintain the neutrality of Belgium. But as in 1793, the opening of the Scheldt and the breach by France of her treaty obligations, technically occasioned the entrance of Great Britain into a twenty years' European War, so in 1914 statesmen and nation recognised that the real and ultimate issue that was at stake, over and above the stipulations of treaties, was the advance to European domination of a great and aggressive military power. A very short time in each case sufficed to convince the enormous majority of our countrymen that the liberties of Europe and our own security were to be safeguarded only by the sword.

At 11 p.m. on Tuesday, August 4th, Great Britain and Germany were at war, as Mr. Asquith informed the House of Commons the following day, at the same time giving notice of a motion for a vote of credit for a hundred millions. On the Thursday the Prime Minister in noble and spirited words addressed the House of Commons, on an occasion as impressive and as big with fate as any in its long history. It was unnecessary, he said, for him to go again over the ground traversed by Sir Edward Grey, who had already and deservedly earned for himself the title of Peacemaker of Europe, and who had striven to the very last moment to preserve the peace of the world.

“ I am entitled to say and I do say, and I do so on behalf of this country—I speak not for a party, I speak for the country as a whole—that we made every effort any Government could possibly make for peace. But this war has been forced upon us. What is it we are fighting for? Every one knows, and no one knows better than the Government, the terrible incalculable suffering, economic, social, personal and political which war and especially a war between the great Powers of the world, must entail. There is no man amongst us sitting on this bench in these trying days—more trying perhaps than any body of statesmen for a hundred years have had to pass through—there is not a man amongst us who has not, during the whole of that time, had clearly before his vision the almost unequalled suffering which war, even in a just cause, must bring about, not only to the people who are for the moment living in this country and the other countries of the world, but to posterity, and to the whole prospects of European civilisation. Every step we took, we took with that vision before our eyes, and with a sense of responsibility which it is impossible to describe. Unhappily if—in spite of all our efforts to keep the peace, and with that full and overpowering consciousness of the result, if the issue be decided in favour of war, we have nevertheless thought it to be the duty as well as the interest of this country to go to war, the House may be well assured, it was because we believe, and I am certain the country will believe, we are unsheathing our sword in a just cause.”

In two sentences he would say what we were fighting for, first to fulfil a solemn international obligation, secondly "to vindicate the principle, which in these days when force, material force, sometimes seems to be the dominant influence and factor in the development of mankind, we are fighting to vindicate the principle that small nationalities are not to be crushed, in defiance of international good faith, by the arbitrary will of a strong and over-mastering Power. I do not believe any nation ever entered into a great controversy—and this is one of the greatest history will ever know—with a clearer conscience and a stronger conviction that it is fighting not for aggression, not for the maintenance even of its own selfish interests, but that it is fighting in defence of principles, the maintenance of which is vital to the civilisation of the world. With a full conviction, not only of the wisdom and justice, but of the obligations which lay upon us to challenge this great issue, we are entering into the struggle. Let us now make sure that all the resources, not only of the United Kingdom, but of the vast Empire of which it is the centre, shall be thrown into the scale."

The Prime Minister at the same time announced the appointment of Lord Kitchener as Secretary of State for War; and the House of Commons unanimously responded to his request for a war vote of £100,000,000; for an increase to the army of half a million of men—votes the scale of which was without precedent in our history.

Now what was happening throughout these days in the councils of Berlin and Vienna? Our friendly relations in recent years with France were known to all Europe; and our deep national interest in the independence and neutrality of Belgium was equally a matter of common knowledge to the whole world. As lately as 1870, at an early stage of the Franco-German War, Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville, as peace-loving statesmen as ever sat in a British Cabinet, on the independence of Belgium appearing to be in danger, pledged Great Britain to either combatant to resist an invasion, by the other, of that country. Whilst they were sufficiently sanguine to think that even in that case Great Britain might avoid taking part in the general operations



of the European War, Mr. Gladstone was ready and willing at once to send an army of 20,000 men to Antwerp as earnest of our intentions. Prussia at once and France after a few days' delay came into the arrangement, and so it happened that the frontiers of Belgium were respected by both. It was not, however, only the words of an express treaty that would always prevent British statesmen or people from suffering the domination of a military dictator—either Napoleon or Hohenzollern—over the coasts and ports and fortresses of the small but independent nations of Northern Europe. The treaty guarantee but confirmed a policy, imposed upon us by the facts of the case, necessary for our security and strengthened by considerations of public morality and national good faith. Now the sovereigns and statesmen of the Central Powers knew all this. How then did it happen that they acted as if blind to the dangers that were staring them in the face, and plunged their nations into the terrible war which was to be their ruin?

Our ambassadors at Berlin and Vienna, after they had returned to London, wrote to the Foreign Office exceedingly interesting despatches describing their last days in these capitals, and from these one can gather to some extent the temper and spirit there prevailing. Throughout these trying days, says Sir Edward Goschen, he received nothing but courtesy from Herr von Jagow<sup>1</sup> and the officials of the German Foreign Office; though after the declaration of war the Kaiser himself lost command of his temper and sent a message and a messenger to the ambassador alike lacking in ordinary civility. It is perfectly clear that from the first Germany was determined to send her troops through Belgium. She would buy British neutrality, if she could, by future pledges not to annex Belgium or French territory; but on no consideration whatever would she undertake, at the present time, not to cross the Belgian frontier. Herr von Jagow went again, on Sir Edward Goschen asking for the observance of Belgian neutrality, into Germany's reasons for persistent refusal. "The Imperial Government," he said, "had been obliged to take this step, for they had to

<sup>1</sup> German Secretary of State.

advance into France by the quickest and easiest way, so as to be enabled to get well ahead with their operations and endeavour to strike some decisive blow as soon as possible. It was a matter of life and death for them, as if they had gone by the more southern route they could not have hoped in the view of the paucity of roads and the strength of the fortresses to have got through without formidable opposition entailing great loss of time, which would have meant time gained by the Russians for bringing up their troops to the German frontier. Rapidity of action was the great German asset, while that of Russia was an inexhaustible supply of troops. . . ." Later in the day when the British ambassador called with the final request for an answer that evening, intimating that in case of non-compliance he must leave Berlin, the Secretary of State, though full of regrets for the terrible consequences that might ensue, remained not less firm. "The safety of the Empire rendered it absolutely necessary that the Imperial troops should advance through Belgium."

In a short subsequent conversation: "Herr von Jagow expressed his poignant regret at the crumbling of his entire policy and that of the Chancellor, which had been to make friends with Great Britain, and then through Great Britain, to get closer to France. I said that this sudden end to my work in Berlin was to me also a matter of deep regret and disappointment, but that he must understand that under the circumstances, and in view of our engagements, His Majesty's Government could not have acted otherwise."

Sir Edward Goschen then went on to see the Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, whom he found greatly agitated, and who "harangued him" for twenty minutes. "The step taken," he said, "by His Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree; just for a word—'neutrality,' a word which in war time had so often been disregarded—just for a scrap of paper Great Britain was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her. All his efforts in that direction had been rendered useless by this last terrible step, and the policy to which, as I knew, he had devoted himself since his accession to office had tumbled down like a house of cards. What we had done

was unthinkable; it was like striking a man from behind while he was fighting for his life against two assailants. He held Great Britain responsible for all the terrible events that might happen. I protested strongly against this and said that as he and his Secretary of State considered on strategical grounds that it was a matter of life and death to Germany to advance through Belgium and violate her neutrality, so it was a matter of life and death for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement to do the utmost to defend Belgian neutrality if attacked. . . . As I was leaving, he said that the blow of Great Britain joining Germany's enemies was all the greater that almost up to the last moment he and his Government had been working with us and supporting our efforts to maintain peace between Austria and Russia. I said that this was part of the tragedy which saw the two nations fall apart just at the moment when the relations between them had been more friendly and cordial than they had been for years. . . . No one could regret this more than I. . . ."

Shortly afterwards the news was circulated in the streets that Great Britain had declared war on Germany, and a riotous mob assembled in front of the British Embassy, breaking windows and throwing stones till the streets were cleared by the police. The Berlin mob was for war.

In Vienna the newspapers and public opinion had strongly favoured Austrian hostilities against Servia. The public, at the end of July, neither expected nor wished for the acceptance of terms of accommodation between the two States, and when it became known that Austria had rejected the Servian reply "Vienna burst into a frenzy of delight, vast crowds parading the streets and singing patriotic songs till the small hours of the morning." There was, to begin with, no want of friendliness on the part of the Austrian people towards Great Britain, and apparently very little perception that Austro-Servian hostilities would almost certainly entail a general European War. The feeling of the populace was simply hatred of the Servians, and a desire to avenge their own wrongs. The statesmen of course looked further, and clearly recognised that the peace of the world was now in

great jeopardy. Thus towards the end of July, according to Sir Maurice de Bunsen, conversations were taking place at St. Petersburg between the Russian Foreign Office and the Austrian ambassador that showed a desire on both sides to find some way of avoiding the general catastrophe.<sup>1</sup> But the tension now had become much greater between Russia and Germany than between Russia and Austria. An arrangement between the two last Powers seemed almost in sight, Austria appearing to be willing to accept mediation on certain points of the dispute with Servia. "Austria in fact had finally yielded, and that she herself had at this point good hopes of a peaceful issue was shown by Count Berchtold's statement<sup>2</sup> on August 1st that Austria had not 'banged the door' on compromise nor cut off the conversations." In the opinion of Sir Maurice the Austrian Foreign Office and the Russian ambassador at Vienna were working hard for peace. "Unfortunately," continues Sir Maurice, "the conversations at St. Petersburg and Vienna were cut short by the transfer of the dispute to the more dangerous ground of a direct conflict between Germany and Russia. Germany intervened on July 31st by means of her double ultimatums to St. Petersburg and Paris. . . ."

The fat was now in the fire ; Germany declaring war on Russia on August 1st and on France on August 3rd. "A few days' delay might in all probability have saved Europe from one of the greatest calamities in history." Now it was too late, for Austria, war having once begun, necessarily supported Germany against France and Russia. On August 12th Great Britain broke off her relations with Austria, Sir Maurice leaving Vienna, amidst expressions of great regret on both sides at the rupture of the friendly relations and sentiments that had so long existed between the two nations. Italy, for the time being, though a member of the Triple Alliance, maintained her neutrality on the amply sufficient ground that she was bound only to act defensively in that alliance, in case of aggressive action by other Powers against Germany and Austria. She was not herself bound to join in

<sup>1</sup> Sir Maurice de Bunsen to Sir E. Grey, September 1st, 1914.

<sup>2</sup> See despatch, August 1st, 1914, Sir E. Grey to Sir M. de Bunsen.



aggressive action by the Central Powers against France and Russia, and such she could not help recognising was now their common purpose.

The neutrality of Italy, to become later her alliance with the Western Powers and Russia, would hardly have been possible for her had Sir Edward Grey earlier in the Austrian-Servian controversy dropped his policy of conciliation and proclaimed an armed alliance against the Central Powers. As Sir George Buchanan on July 24th at St. Petersburg put it, in language afterwards approved by Sir Edward, direct British interests in Servia were nil, and British public opinion would not sanction a war on behalf of that country. It would, therefore, be quite unreasonable, he said, to expect His Majesty's Government to make a declaration of solidarity with France and Russia which would entail an unconditional engagement on their part to support those Powers by force of arms. It is hardly possible to doubt that if this course had been taken, the effect would have been to play the German game and consolidate the Triple Alliance.

The accounts given by our ambassadors of the language and bearing of the German and Austrian statesmen with whom they dealt do not convey the belief that they were not themselves personally sincere in their desire for peace, or that they were in any way dead to the incalculable sufferings and trouble that a European war would cause. In Germany there were some statesmen, as well as responsible men in all classes, who deprecated the policy of German "Jingoes," and disliked most of all the idea of war with Great Britain. It must be remembered that the German war party was not officially in power, and that the German Chancellor did not belong to it. Nevertheless, its influence appears to have prevailed in those critical days—almost hours—when the issue between peace and war hung in the balance. The Chancellor, speaking in hot blood, yet sadly enough, said that *up to almost the last moment* his Government had been working with us to keep Austria and Russia at peace. What was this inexorable fate which compelled the great nations of Europe and their peace-loving Governments to fly at each others' throats?

What was there almost at the last moment to cause the sanguine expectations of a peaceful issue to fall to pieces like a house of cards?

The German Emperor returned from his cruise on the Norway coast at the end of July, and on the evening of the 28th sent a telegram to the Czar, a sovereign whose genuine attachment to the cause of peace was above suspicion. The view which each took of the dispute between Austria and Servia was what might have been expected. The Kaiser sympathised with the demand of the former for the punishment of Servian murderers and regicides, whilst the Czar was deeply moved by "the shameful war," declared by Austria against a weak nation. "The indignation in Russia is immense and he shared it." In the cause of the general peace he sought the Kaiser's help. Would he not prevent his Austrian ally from going too far?<sup>1</sup> But the fears which mobilisation cannot fail to arouse amongst Powers who regard each other with the utmost distrust and suspicion now militated strongly against a peaceful solution. Kaiser and Czar each held that the burden of responsibility for war and its terrible consequences lay on the shoulders of the other. "How can I," asked the former in a later telegram, "who am responsible for the safety of my Empire," knowing of the formidable warlike preparations on the Eastern frontier,<sup>2</sup> refrain from taking similar precautions? Accordingly on August 1st Germany formally declared war on Russia for refusing to comply with the demand to demobilise. "If the Imperial Government had failed to guard against this peril, it would have compromised the security and the very existence of Germany."<sup>3</sup>

But neither Kaiser nor German Foreign Office were ignorant of the dangers arising from the Austrian ultimatum to Servia, and both the British and Russian ambassadors at Vienna were convinced that the German ambassador there

<sup>1</sup> French Yellow Book.

<sup>2</sup> If some quite recently published communications between Kaiser and Czar are genuine there is reason to believe that the latter, who was undoubtedly a peace-loving sovereign, was purposely kept in the dark as to the extent of Russian mobilisation by his own officials.

<sup>3</sup> To the German ambassador at St. Petersburg.

desired, and was working for war between Austria and Russia, from the first. On July 26th the Belgian Minister at Berlin had already written to his Government as follows : " The ultimatum to Serbia is a blow contrived by Vienna and Berlin, or rather contrived here and carried out at Vienna. Requit for the assassination of the Austrian heir-apparent and the Pan-Serb propaganda serves as a stalking-horse. The real aim, apart from the crushing of Serbia and the stifling of Jugo-Slav aspirations, is to deal a deadly thrust at Russia and France, with the hope that England will stand aside from the struggle. In order to vindicate this theory I beg to remind you of the view prevailing in the German General Staff, namely, that a war with France or Russia is unavoidable and close at hand—a view which the Emperor has been induced to share. This war, eagerly desired by the military and Pan-German party, might be undertaken to-day under conditions extremely favourable for Germany, conditions that are not likely to arise again for some time to come." <sup>1</sup>

*When* was it that the Kaiser had been induced to share what were, no doubt, the beliefs and wishes of the General Staff ? Was it during or before his Norwegian cruise ? He had in the past incurred much unpopularity with his subjects in holding back the warlike ambitions of Junkerdom ; and it would possibly have been a serious matter for him had he again seemed to yield in any degree to what were held to be the threats of a hostile anti-German alliance. Probably the Belgian Minister rightly attributes the outbreak of war to the Imperial belief in its inevitability sooner or later, to the opportunity of the moment being very favourable for Germany, and to the hope that Great Britain would hold aloof from the conflict. This strong unwillingness of the Kaiser to believe in what militated against his hopes was shown again nearly three years later when he refused to believe that the United States would declare war against Germany.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Germany before the War," by Baron Beyns.

<sup>2</sup> See Mr. Gerard's (American ambassador's) account of interviews with the Kaiser.

We know now that the war *was* inevitable, if the military views and ambitions of a powerful section of German and especially of Prussian opinion were to be allowed entirely to dominate the foreign policy of the Empire. There could be no permanent peace for Europe whilst menaced by a German military dictatorship on land and sea, intended to spread by force the doctrines of Pan-Germanism throughout the world. Hitherto these opinions, though always formidable, had not been for practical purposes always in the ascendant. In Great Britain, European war had not been regarded as inevitable. Such anti-German war clamour as had existed here came only from irresponsible people, and assisted rather than otherwise the German anti-British fanatics, who professed to see in these manifestations a spirit of hostile British aggression on a hated rival.

If the German General Staff were right in believing that war with France and Russia was close at hand as well as "inevitable," there need be little surprise at their thinking that the summer of 1914 offered them a better opportunity than was ever likely to recur. The Russian danger would be a far more formidable one after the contemplated extension of their strategic railways to the eastern frontier of Germany. They felt sure of their power at the present moment to outweigh the French both in numbers and in scale of preparation. The Kiel Canal was ready. The British Government, always anxious for peace, would in view of disturbance, possibly even of civil war in Ireland, be more than ever unwilling to depart from neutrality. The Kaiser, the General Staff, and Junkerdom were now at one. There were no statesmen capable, even if they had been willing, to restrain the passion of army and people. And assuredly when policy had brought it about no great nation ever plunged into war with more complete unanimity than did the Germans in the month of August four years ago.

The German Chancellor's plea for invading Belgium will not hold water for a moment, either as a defence or excuse for that lawless act of violence against a small State whose neutrality and independence Germany herself had guaran-



teed. That step, it is quite clear, was not suddenly taken, but was an essential part of a strategical plan long before thought out. It was the first step in an aggressive campaign against France. Had the case been that of a combined sudden and simultaneous attack upon Germany's Eastern and Western frontiers by Russia and France, then indeed the Kaiser in self-defence might well have sought in some way or other to obtain a right of passage for his troops. The plea that an action unwarrantable in other circumstances was taken solely in defence of the safety of the State is one that cannot well be summarily dismissed. Canning's seizure in 1807 of the Danish Fleet which would otherwise have fallen into the hands of Napoleon, and given him naval superiority at a critical moment over the British Fleet, is a case in point. As against the rights of Denmark this high-handed action could not be justified. It was bitterly criticised at the time, but there are not many nowadays, all the facts being known, who do not think that the necessities of the case excused or rather compelled the British Government in protection of the vast interests at stake to act as it did.<sup>1</sup> In 1914 it was not because the plea of necessity was a bad one, but because the facts did not support it, that the judgment of the whole world loudly condemned the action of Germany. Germany had made the war, and her first step in an aggressive campaign was to break her most solemn pledges, and attack on purely strategical grounds a neutral and weaker State, whose neutrality and independence she was bound to respect.

When the Kaiser returned from Norway there was still time to avert war, had he determined to do so. Austria—the first Power to break the peace by declaring war on Serbia—was willing to consider possibilities of compromise in conversation with Russia, and did not despair of peace. Of the desire for peace in Great Britain and France there could be no doubt whatever. Who was there then that wanted war? What nation in that fatal month of August, 1914, did war suit? Russia, France, Belgium, Great Britain, were for

<sup>1</sup> See "George Canning and his Times," by J. E. Marriott, and also Dr. Holland Rose, in "Life of Napoleon" and in *English Historical Review*.

peace. Austria was hesitating. The Kaiser decided for war. On his shoulders rests the responsibility for a decision which was to plunge almost the whole civilised world into a struggle unprecedented for its ruthlessness, for its scale of slaughter, for its devastation. A war made in the supposed interest of her military ambition was to end in the ruin of the German people.

## CHAPTER V

### PREPARATION FOR WAR AND FIRST STEPS

MR. ASQUITH's appeal to the people of the United Kingdom and Empire to throw their whole weight into the war met with a noble and ready response. One spirit animated Mother Country, Dominions, and Colonies all over the world, each entering into rivalry as to who should do most in the common cause—a splendid testimony to the success with which our statesmen had placed beyond all doubt and cavil the high motives that had inspired their policy, and irrefragable evidence of the happy relations existing between the different parts of the Empire. British subjects everywhere and of every race and creed and colour recognised that the war was entered upon with no selfish or partial aims or ambitions, but in vindication of the rights of nations against military aggression, and of the honourable obligation of treaties. They recognised also that in this supreme struggle the security—almost the existence—of the British Empire might well be at stake.

Nevertheless the Prime Minister and his colleagues, whilst encouraged by the patriotic spirit of the people, could not but have been keenly anxious as to the pressing difficulties and dangers of the moment. So greatly had the world changed that experience of former European wars hardly afforded precedents to guide them in the situation that had now arisen. The marvellous growth of international commerce had made each nation far less dependent than in former times on its own internal resources. Great Britain and Germany were the two greatest commercial and trading countries of Europe. More than any others they had prospered by the expansion in modern times of the trade of the world. Both had been enriched by the huge business they had done with each other. The sanguine expectations

of Manchester politicians a couple of generations ago had indeed been disappointed, viz. : that common financial and commercial interests and close business relations between citizens of different States would insure their friendly and peaceful disposition towards each other. But alas ! in a world of men, human ambitions, passions, temperaments, were still to count for something ; and at certain times would even outweigh considerations of far-sighted self-interest ! All these things were clear enough to the world on August 4th, 1914. But what was by no means clear, even to statesmen, was the effect that would be produced, perhaps before even a shot was fired, by the sudden cessation of all business and business relations between the great trading nations of Europe.

London was the financial centre of the world. Germany, no doubt, indulged hopes of the financial confusion that a general collapse of credit would bring upon the people whom they were soon to recognise as the most enduring and invincible of their foes. The action of Ministers was strong and prompt, or calamitous results must have followed their warlike action. They called into council the best financial advice that the city of London could afford. To avoid panic it was everything to gain time. Monday, August 3rd, was Bank Holiday, and by Royal Proclamation under the Bank Holiday Act made on that day, the three following days were ordered also to be observed as Bank Holidays. On the same day an Act of Parliament was passed giving power to the Government by Royal Proclamation to postpone payments on bills of exchange on certain conditions therein specified. On Tuesday, August 4th, the Government, acting under a section of the Regulation of the Forces Act, 1871, took possession and control of all the railways in Great Britain for the use of the Forces of the Crown and for the purposes of the King's service. On August 6th Parliament authorised the issue of £1 and 10s. currency notes, made postal orders legal tender, and permitted (with approval of the Treasury) the issue by the Bank of England of notes in excess of the legal limit. A month later the announcement was made that an agreement had been entered into



between the Government and the Bank of England, under which the latter would provide acceptors of pre-moratorium bills with funds to meet them at maturity. In these proceedings the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer acted with firmness and discretion and successfully guided the country through a period of considerable danger.

The general public at the time naturally paid much greater attention to the appointment of Field Marshal Lord Kitchener as Secretary of State for War than to these important financial measures. With the army, with the public, and with the Press Lord Kitchener's reputation deservedly stood very high. His services in South Africa, in India, and in Egypt, had been conspicuous, and he was universally believed to be a man not of words only, but one who would *get things done*. From Egypt, where difficulties were apprehended, the Government were loth to move him ; but the exigencies of the European situation prevailed, and on August 6th he was brought into the Cabinet, it being officially stated at the same time that his joining the Ministry had no relation to controversial politics, but was to enable our greatest soldier to direct the energies of the nation to the best purpose, and to guide the conduct of the war. Party spirit in Parliament and in the Press had just before been running with extreme violence ; and by this first step taken on the very outbreak of war the Prime Minister showed that the time for party strife had now gone by, and that his Ministry would act on the behalf of the nation as a whole with the sole end of maintaining the security of the State and obtaining the objects for which we had drawn the sword. The example so set was a good one. Yet there is much to be said in ordinary times and in days of peace for the usual British practice of placing a statesman rather than a professional soldier or sailor at the head of the military and naval departments of the State. But in 1914 the conditions were altogether exceptional. Not a voice was raised in public against Lord Kitchener's appointment, and it was certain that Parliament would furnish him without limit with the means to carry his projects and wishes into effect. In no previous war had the

country ever placed such implicit confidence in a British General. Practically there was no limit to his powers, or to the support in men, and money, and supplies which Parliament was ready to give him.

When we compare the relative strength of Great Britain and her foes at the opening of the great European War in 1793, which was to last for twenty years, with their relative strength at the commencement of the present world-strife four years ago, we are struck by the enormous improvement, positive and relative, in our own position. What would not Pitt and Grenville have given to have had such a power behind them as King George V.'s Ministers were able to call into the field? At the earlier date only a decade had passed since the termination of that war which had caused the loss to the British Empire of her finest and most prosperous colonies. Her fighting strength was then drawn solely from the population of Great Britain and Ireland, which in 1793 cannot have exceeded fourteen millions, whilst that of France was about twenty-six millions, a state of things which had always greatly encouraged Napoleon in the belief that France must ultimately be the victor in the prolonged duel between the nations. In 1914 the population of the United Kingdom had much more than trebled, and the British Empire had become in fact a league of nations—Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa rallying to the common flag and the common cause and sending large armies to Europe; whilst British and Native India and every Crown Colony showed equal zeal in strengthening the armies of the King, and in contributing in men and money to imperial defence.

The unpreparedness for war of Pitt's Government was due to the fact that our statesmen and people, conscious of their own peaceful aspirations, looked upon war as infinitely improbable. Even to the end of 1792 the Ministry saw no reason why the internal dissensions in France, or the invasion of that country by Austria and Prussia, should draw England from her neutrality. At the beginning of the year, when proposing his Sinking Fund, Pitt had based his calculations on the probability that peace would endure for fifteen

years! "I am not indeed presumptuous enough to suppose," were his words, "that when I name fifteen years I am not naming a period in which events may arise which human foresight cannot reach, and which may baffle all our conjectures. We must not count with certainty on a continuance of our present prosperity during such an interval; but unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country when from the situation in Europe we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than we may at the present moment."

Alongside this sanguine forecast may be placed the remarkable announcement in July, 1870, by Lord Granville on the authority of Mr. Hammond, the able and experienced head of the Foreign Office, only a few days—almost hours—before the outbreak of the Franco-German War. Rarely had there been so great a lull, he said, in foreign affairs, and the British Foreign Office was not aware of any great question that was then pending! So much for the power of our greatest statesmen and most experienced departmental officials to penetrate the veil even of the immediate future!

It was not till the last day of 1792—the last year of real peace that Great Britain was to know for two-and-twenty years—that Grenville wrote very frankly to the French Minister that England could not suffer France to annul treaties at her pleasure or to dominate the Netherlands. If she desired England's friendship she must abandon her views of aggression, and cease to insult or disturb other Governments.

When in February, 1793, France declared war against England the French Republic had not merely expelled Austria and Prussia from her territory—she had occupied Brussels, Liège, and Aix-la-Chapelle, seized the Palatinate and the important fortress of Mayence, possessed herself of Antwerp and the line of the Scheldt, annexed Savoy and Nice, and sent her troops to Geneva. Even setting aside the explosion of feeling caused in England by the atrocities of the French Revolution and the execution of Louis XVI., the imminent danger to this country and to

Europe must have compelled any British Ministry to draw the sword.

The British army at that time numbered some 17,000 regular troops, behind whom stood the old constitutional force of the militia. The navy, though in recent years it had been reduced, was still maintained as a formidable force and was commanded by able and enterprising seamen. It was increased at the opening of the war to 45,000 men ; whilst at the same time 10,000 were added to the army. In the great Continental wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries England had played a secondary part so far as military operations on land were concerned. Her armies had been comparatively very small, and the great weight which she threw into the scale was due to her unassailable position, her powerful navy, and the assistance she was capable of rendering in various ways to her Continental allies. British statesmen then and since would have felt happier had circumstances rendered it always possible for them to carry on successful warfare on lines so well calculated to bring out the real strength of an Island Empire—to defend the British Empire by her own naval power, and to defeat the aggression of military ambition abroad by inspiring and upholding against it a coalition of the Continental nations. The succouring of our allies by subventions and supplies, the sending expeditionary forces rather than huge armies to the Continent, the destruction of the enemy's naval power and commerce, the cutting him off from his oversea possessions—these are the means by which in the past triumphant success was ultimately achieved and a great Empire built up by the Island State.

Pitt had been Prime Minister for ten years before the outbreak of the French war. Mr. Asquith and his predecessor, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been in office for nearly nine years before August, 1914 ; so that full responsibility for the adequacy of the measures taken for the defence of the nation rightly falls in each case upon the statesmen and party that had been so long in power. The easy criticism that the nation should have been armed at the commencement with the military forces which a few years of warfare



proved to be necessary in a tremendous struggle is neither a just nor a reasonable one. Preparation of that sort is not possible to statesmen and nations that mean peace, though to an autocrat and a nation bent on aggressive war and choosing their own time it comes naturally enough.

We rightly now remember Pitt for the high spirit and calm determination which enabled his country to face defeat and the terrible dangers of that day. To him in no small measure was due the ultimate triumph over her foes. But in the first years of that war our failures were many and great—in the Low Countries, and Northern France, at Toulon, and in Western France our hopes were disappointed. After four years we had been driven out of Corsica, and our fleet had left the Mediterranean. The Bank of England had suspended cash payments. Even in our victorious navy, the guardian of our shores, there was deep-seated trouble and disaffection. Pitt's coalitions had broken down. Our allies had failed us. France was turning her full strength against England ; and in that most critical year of our national history—in 1797—between the glorious battles of St. Vincent and Camperdown, the statesman whom we now reverence as the " pilot that weathered the storm " was so unpopular with the crowd that he could hardly show himself unguarded in the streets of London. He was keenly desirous of peace, were that possible with honour and the security of the State. The Ministers of King George III. at the opening of war in 1793 had expected it to be a short war. France was bankrupt, much divided in herself, in a condition not yet emerged from anarchical confusion, whilst against her were combined the great nations of Europe. The anticipations of rulers and statesmen and soldiers as to the course of wars upon which they are entering are seldom verified by events. And there was much at the time to make the forecasts of Pitt more than plausible.

The Ministers of George V., in August, 1914, on the outbreak of war, found themselves in a much more enviable position. Political faction came at once to an end. Mr. Asquith had the full and ungrudging support of the Parliamentary Opposition in both Houses ; and very soon all over

the country Liberals and Conservatives, Unionists and Home Rulers, Free Traders and Protectionists, were from the same platforms urging the people to enter the ranks of the army and support the war. Neither was there any distinction between class and class, between rich and poor. All were animated by the same intense feeling of patriotism and indignation, and alike eager to make personal sacrifice in the common cause. For once at all events and for a time,

“None were for a Party,  
But all were for the State,”

after a fashion for which in our own country there was no precedent “in the brave days of old.” In the old days, the French Revolution and the French War had indeed split the Parliamentary Opposition from top to bottom and rendered it powerless to defeat Pitt’s policy; but the bitter hostility of a not very numerous faction remained, led by some of the most brilliant statesmen of the day, and it continued for years to do its best to thwart and paralyse the action of Government. In 1914, when war broke out, party rivalry was at an end.

It is almost impossible to doubt that the German war party, with whom the Kaiser had ultimately thrown in his lot, had determined that war should break out at the time it did. Germany chose the moment to suit herself. She was ready “to the last button.” Two or three years later both Russia and France might, she thought, have improved their position as against Germany; whilst the domestic troubles of Great Britain seemed in German eyes, in 1914, to make it most improbable that she could or would depart from her neutrality. Of course neither to France nor to Russia did German hostility come as a surprise. It was many years since the Czar, on a visit to France, had announced to Europe that Russians and French were more than friends—they were allies. In each country it was believed that sooner or later the struggle must come, and great preparations had been made and vast expenditure incurred to enable them to repel the German danger. France had rendered her frontier towards Germany almost impenetrable; but she had become

well aware that respect for the neutrality and independence of Belgium would not deter her enemy, if it suited him, from making use of that country to facilitate her invasion.

Policy and national preparedness for war go together. An aggressor, of course, prepares beforehand his means and methods of aggression ; and his power of choosing his time necessarily places the defence at some disadvantage at first. In Great Britain people in general did not believe till the last moment that war *must* come, though there also the Government, by their policy of the *Entente*, and by naval and military measures, had taken precautions against a sudden surprise. They underrated, perhaps, the marvellous power of the German armies, which, commanded with extraordinary ability, have made head against a whole world in arms. The victories of Germany in 1870 and 1871 over France alone did not prevent the sleeplessness of Bismarck's nights when he thought of a Franco-Russian alliance against his countrymen. Englishmen knew well the splendid fighting qualities of Frenchmen, and they attributed their defeat in the Franco-German War to adventitious circumstances—phenomenal military genius in Prussia, and in France an incapable Government and rulers. Assuredly they saw no reason why in another war the result should not be entirely different.

It was known that France and Russia had long been prepared to resist in combination the possible and even probable aggression of the German Powers. And in England people would have been slow to believe that in such circumstances the French armies were not able to defend their own capital against the invader without the assistance on the French soil of a British army. It was unnecessary, they believed, and not part of their duty, to undertake the military defence of Paris with a land army on a Continental scale. The aim of our Government had been to prepare the nation for war by providing it with a predominant navy, whose ascendancy should be beyond question, and with an "expeditionary force"—an army limited in number, but of first-rate quality, ready to be thrown at a moment's notice on any theatre of war where its services might seem to be most required. This

was the plan that had the approval of responsible statesmen on both sides of politics. The system of basing military service on conscription, universal and doubtless necessary amongst Continental nations, had practically no friends in Great Britain, where the spirit of volunteering for service in the army and the fleet has always been exceptionally strong. It was believed to be capable of providing us with men in quality first-rate, and in quantity sufficient to meet the needs of the Island State.

When war breaks out it is in full accordance with precedent that the British public should be solemnly warned by self-constituted advisers that its parliamentary and political institutions place the nation at immense disadvantage in contending with other nations under a more absolute or personal rule. It might not be easy to establish by historical precedent that parliamentary Governments and democracies are less able than autocracies to carry on sustained and successful war. Many of the most terrible military disasters that the world has seen have been caused by the insensate ambition and folly and mismanagement of an absolute military dictator. But it is undoubtedly the case that a patriotic democracy which would not play into the hands of the national enemy must for a time place itself under restraints which would rightly be felt in days of peace to be undue restrictions of liberty. Parliament and the public must trust the Government to carry on work which they themselves cannot perform. "Constitutional Government," said the Prince Consort during the Crimean War, "is under a heavy trial, and can only pass triumphantly through it if the country will grant its confidence—a patriotic, indulgent, and self-denying confidence—to Her Majesty's Government. Without this all their labour must be in vain."

In the present war, side by side with the two great parliamentary and republican democracies of Western Europe stood the autocratic Empire of Russia—a regenerate Russia, it was supposed, well on the way to constitutional freedom—the bulk of its vast population stirred to its depths by enthusiasm for the Slav cause. "Russia had one special advantage in such a war. In the Czardom she had a natural centre



of leadership, an office with mystic sanctions which no other modern kingship could display. The humblest peasant from the backwoods fought for a monarch whom he had never seen, as the soldiers of the French Guard fought for Napoleon. In the Allied lines of the West there was a strange mixture of nationalities and races ; but it was nothing to that battle front in the East. There indeed you had a bewildering array of figures : Finn and Tartar, Caucasian and Mongol, Buriats and Samoyedes and Kirghiz and Turcomans, fighting side by side with the more normal types of Russia proper. To weld such a miscellany into a fighting force more was needed than skilful organisation, more even than a great national cause ; it required the spell of a kingship mystical and paternal, and half divine.”<sup>1</sup> These words of Colonel Buchan in his excellent “History” may perhaps apply to more than the *army* of the Czar. The solidarity of the Russian Nation or Empire may for generations to come require the inspiration of personal sovereignty or leadership.

Russia with a possible army of ten millions of men was spoken of in English newspapers at the opening of the war as the “great steam roller,” whose relentless advance was to level all the military might of the German Powers. Our Fleet was supreme at sea. A very fine British army, splendidly equipped, had been successfully landed in France. The public and the newspapers were sanguine. “Steam Roller” and “Business as usual,” thanks to the newspapers, were words in every one’s mouth, and till the capture of Liège, the occupation of Brussels, the fall of Namur, and the advance into France of the German armies in the last week of August, the general belief in England was that the war would end in the victory of the Allies before Christmas. Lord Kitchener had made a sounder estimate of the task that lay before the country.

<sup>1</sup> Nelson’s “History of the War,” Vol. III., p. 118.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISAPPOINTMENT AND CRITICISM

"ENGLAND has in this war," writes Ex-President Roosevelt in May, 1917, "risen to a height of achievement loftier than that which she attained in the struggle with Napoleon; she has reached that height in a far shorter period." It is true the nation had, in his view, been short-sighted, and was not for long awake to the gigantic perils which threatened her existence. The difficulty lay, he says, in rousing her from her shortsightedness, though from the very beginning her naval effort and her money effort had been extraordinary; but her army, he adds, good as it was, was not "the equal of the huge, carefully prepared, thoroughly co-ordinated military machines of those against whom and beside whom it fought." (See Introduction to Mrs. Humphry Ward's "Towards the Goal.")

The promptitude with which the nation replied to the call of Belgium upon her to redeem her word resembled, and in no degree fell short of, her response in 1826 to the call of Portugal to support her ancient ally against the aggression of Spain. Bound both by ties of old friendship and by solemn treaty, the Government of Lord Liverpool did not hesitate for a single moment as to the duty of the nation. Ministers were informed of the aggression on Friday night, on Saturday decided on action, on Sunday obtained the King's sanction, on Monday communicated their intentions to both Houses of Parliament, and on Tuesday morning, loudly cheered by all parties, informed the House of Commons that troops were already marching to the ports for immediate embarkation. In those days, as in these, there were pacifists in the land and in Parliament. "Ought we to be bound by an impolitic treaty? Why help Portugal, who could never help us? It was madness

to plunge recklessly and unprepared into a war of which no one could see the end!" And so on, and so on. Nevertheless, to all such carpings the country turned a deaf ear, and in 1826 Mr. Canning spoke on behalf of an enthusiastic and substantially united nation; as, nearly ninety years later, Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey spoke and acted for a united Empire. History will relate how the prompt intervention of British arms by sea and land saved, in 1914, as nothing else could have done, the freedom of Europe from the overmastering power of Germany.

Mrs. Ward's two admirable volumes "England's Effort" and "Towards the Goal" have done much to open the eyes of her countrymen and of our allies to the part that the Kingdom and Empire were actually playing in the world war. They afforded a much needed answer to the notion, strangely propagated and encouraged by writers in English newspapers and sometimes even in less ephemeral literature, and not unnaturally obtaining some little credence abroad, that Great Britain was not putting her shoulder to the wheel, and was allowing the burden of a struggle in which the whole coalition was equally interested to fall almost wholly on our allies. How could the Continental soldier believe in a national army in which there were no conscripts? He had and could have no conception of that volunteering spirit which in a couple of years had sent over four millions of men to fill the ranks of our fighting services. A national army without conscription was an impossible conception to those who did not understand the character and nature of the British people, who again on their side could hardly understand the reproaches thrown against our troops—they consisted of "mere mercenaries"—whilst to conscripts alone, apparently, was it conceded that they constituted a "Nation in Arms!"

It is singular that, whilst achieving the great things for which Mr. Roosevelt bestows upon the nation such high praise, so much bitter public controversy amongst ourselves should have been carried on. Never in the whole course of our history have Englishmen *acted* with so much unanimity in pursuing a single end—the winning of victory. Yet

rarely has there been displayed so much of prejudice and of personal hostility (having no doubt their roots largely in party proclivities) as has characterised our anonymous journalism, and the ill-informed and irresponsible chatter of clubs and drawing-rooms. The *Nation's* actions were noble and patriotic. Rival "politicians" and even party caucuses, which it was supposed existed only to counterwork each other, were in fact working hand in glove together, whilst in too many cases those professional critics, who profess to look down from a higher region on the morality of the political arena—Parliament and Platform—seemed to see in the exigencies of the time and the stirred emotions of men only an opportunity for venting their own narrow prejudices for or against this or that cause, or their personal feelings for or against this or that statesman.

Whilst the nation was *acting*—doing its bit in grim earnest—its true and deep sentiments were not really voiced in the hot and exaggerated language of irresponsible men such as these. Our institutions—the House of Lords, the House of Commons, public meetings in recognised fashion, made manifest the national feeling as well as the national will. *There*, there was little either of party carping, or of personal or political abuse. We could have plenty of that in ordinary times; but at a period of great—almost unprecedented—danger to the State, a common patriotism had united public men; and amongst these for the time being, partisan, sectional, personal objects, preferences and antipathies, were swept away. Men who really understood their countrymen attached little importance to the manifestation of these mere surface symptoms of an unhealthy condition of the body politic which did not really exist. Much of this anonymous writing was mischievous, nevertheless, and tended to foster the upgrowth of an atmosphere prejudicial to the good spirit and sound judgment of the people, whilst it was the cause of a good deal of very unjust prejudice against individual statesmen and public characters. It was not to be expected, of course, that the nation should pass through such trials and dangers as have marked the progress of the great world-war without our institutions, our statesmen and our soldiers



being subjected to the severest criticism and censure, and it would be a mistake and a waste of time to take too seriously after the lapse of years the ephemeral utterances of those whose feelings had been carried beyond the reason point by the latest telegram, and who were ready, with that only in their thoughts, to tell us at once the full meaning of each event, what to do, whom to honour and whom to blame. But it may be worth while to try and discover the gist of the multifarious censures that have been repeated against what may be called our British system of conducting the affairs of the nation. And here we find ready to our hand the work of an able writer, who not only wields a picturesque pen, but who is singularly gifted with the power of making *ad captandum* appeals to an audience under the influence of the natural emotions of the moment.

The "Ordeal by Battle" is a book, and a very able book. It is not a newspaper, to be thrown when read into the waste-paper basket, never to be looked at again. And Mr. Oliver's readers, who a few years hence turn over his vivid pages, may regret that the author had not made more use of his powerful pen to maintain, like "A Patriot Statesman,"

"The Day against the Moment, and the Year  
Against the Day . . ."

The upshot of the "Ordeal" would seem to be that nothing has gone well with the British nation, at all events since Waterloo. We have never had a foreign policy all that time, nor would it appear a statesman either! We are now, for the first time, beginning to wake up to that rather elementary fact that policy and armaments are dependent upon each other! And in the last two or three generations it would seem that things have been going worse than ever. It actually appears that "since the Liberal Government came into power in the autumn of 1905, neither of the great parties had succeeded in earning the respect of the other"; from which the conclusion is drawn that political leadership has got to a very low level. Now Mr. Oliver tells us that "no man of action worthy of the name will ever take history for his guide," a saying which contains *some* truth; but at the

same time, happily, he admits that history books may be worth consulting "on occasions" and, therefore, one may be emboldened to ask when from the days of Pitt and Fox, or Gladstone and Disraeli, to those of Asquith and Balfour, the one party ever demonstrated *much* respect for the other? If comparisons are to be made, statesmen of our own time are assuredly not on worse terms with each other and not less lacking in respect for each other, than rival statesmen of an earlier day.

After all, as a mere matter of fact, *has* Great Britain for a century past done so very badly? If we have been without leaders, or policy, or national common sense, it must be by **some special Providence** or sheer good luck that, as compared with every other European country, we have prospered so magnificently! Our growth as a world power is that which mainly provoked the envy and enmity of our German rival. British expansion throughout the world, material progress at home, increased population, improved conditions of life in all classes, have marked the period in which we have been so mightily misgoverned, all the eloquent jeremiads of our friends notwithstanding. There is consolation to be found in the homely British proverb—"the proof of a pudding is in the eating." Like any other nation we have had ups and downs. But surely he must be an oddly constituted mortal who finds in our story of the last hundred years, in any direction, a general record of national failure.

"The aim of British policy," says Mr. Oliver, writing of the year 1914, "has been simply security," thinking doubtless of Mr. Pitt, "yet we have failed to achieve security, owing to our blindness, indolence and lack of leadership. We have refused to realise that we are not living in the Golden Age, that policy in the last resort depends on armaments, that armaments, to effect their purpose, must correspond with policy. Political leaders of all parties up to the outbreak of the present war ignored these essentials; or if they were aware of them in the depths of their own consciences, they failed to trust the people with a full knowledge of the dangers which threatened their security, and of the means

by which those dangers could be withstood." Why is it then that the country has felt itself so much more "secure" from the beginning of the present war than it was possible for it to do at the end of the eighteenth century? There were financial and other panics under Mr. Pitt, whose opponents loudly proclaimed that England's ruin was at hand. There were no panics under Mr. Asquith, financial or otherwise; strong evidence that, though foolish and excited talk was too common in these later days, the real confidence of the nation in its "security" was not shaken, whilst it bent its energies as no nation has ever done in the past to the tremendous struggle before it.

Now is it true that British statesmen on all sides of party politics felt that they were living "in a Golden Age," till August 4th, 1914, roused them from their dreams? Undoubtedly the country was not ready to take a decisive part, at twenty-four hours' notice, in a battle of Armageddon. But when warlike preparation is under consideration it is recognised that some distance separates the condition of an Armageddon from that of a Golden Age! It is beyond all dispute that "statesmen on all sides" had for years had in their mind the possibility of the Empire becoming engaged in a formidable European war; though they had not done, as Mr. Roosevelt apparently thinks they should have done—viz., prepared in advance an army of Continental proportions, the equal of the great military machines of Germany and France. But did our statesmen, in truth, make no preparation to guard against the national danger? This, after the retreat from Mons and for long, remained amongst thoughtless people the favourite charge against British statesmanship. Things were not going well with us and with the Allies, and under the circumstances a certain class of political writer (usually anonymous) was certain to lay the blame in the first instance on the inefficiency of the British system of popular Government, and its inability to guard effectually the vital interests of the State; and in the second place to point out with much personal invective selected individuals as responsible for failure, and meriting public censure.

Now the defence of the nation and the Empire and of their

manifold interests throughout the world is dependent on policy, its handmaid diplomacy, and the power of British arms. And the close correlation of the three has not been revealed to Englishmen for the first time in the "Ordeal by Battle."

In the last few years it is clear that the whole orientation of our foreign policy had changed. Why? Under Lord Salisbury's long rule and before it, whilst like every British Minister he worked for peace and believed in the possibility of maintaining it till the contrary should be proved, the combination against which it was thought necessary to arm in defence was that of France and Russia. Against whom was the so-called two-power naval standard introduced? In Afghanistan and on the north-west frontiers of India against Russian aggression, statesmen and generals concurred in foreseeing that the great struggle, so far as the land forces of the Crown were concerned, would be fought. It is not necessary to condemn the statesmen or the policy of those days for so regarding the future. It may, very probably, have been wise in the then condition of things. But with the insensate military ambition of the German Kaiser and people in recent years, fresh and much greater dangers began to threaten our "security," and our policy and preparations consequently underwent modifications.

Under the excellent management of our foreign policy by Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Grey, already noticed, differences were removed, or settled, "pin pricks" from France became a thing of the past; and even with Russia, that Power with whom strained relations had occurred so often as to seem almost chronic, happy relations of friendship were established. Sir Edward Grey, nevertheless, made it perfectly clear that so far as we were concerned there was no aggressive combination against Germany. Of that the German ambassador was fully aware. We were preparing for defence in certain eventualities, which we hoped might not arise, and which it was in the power of Germany to prevent arising. As time went on, and the conduct of Germany became more and more suspicious and threatening, England and France drew nearer and nearer to each other.



It is said that no preparation was made by this country against the threatening domination of Europe by Imperial Germany! The first "preparation," and in some way the most effectual, was the *Triple Entente*. It was not the work of statesmen who were asleep or who believed that the era of wars had passed from the world; but of men keenly alive to the changing conditions and to the dangers of our time, and who took the most effectual means open to them to guard the freedom and interests of their own country and of Europe against what was to prove the most formidable danger that had threatened them since the days of Napoleon.

Armaments and policy have much bearing on each other, we are told, and it would almost seem as if our statesmen, notwithstanding their "blindness and indolence," had had some dim glimmering of that fact. The main principle of the national policy, as we have seen, from Mr. Pitt to Mr. Oliver, has been "security"; and the main element of that security from the time of William III., and indeed much earlier, down to King George V. has been the naval power of the kingdom. Now it is prosaic, and perhaps also vain, to appeal against rhetorical denunciation of our British incompetents—Statesmen, Parliaments, Politicians, People—to the sober evidence of facts and figures. Expenditure upon the navy in the five years before the outbreak of the war had risen from about thirty-one and a half millions to fifty-one and a half millions per annum; an enormous rise during years of peace, entailing a heavy burden on the taxpayer, which could only be justified as preparation for war—a war which Ministers rightly meant to do their best to avert; but for which, if it came, they were determined that the country should find the Fleet ready. The work had been splendidly accomplished, and when war did come the nation had at its command, ready for immediate action, the most powerful fleet that the world had ever seen. The German flag in home waters, both naval and mercantile, almost disappeared from the sea, to seek the protection of its own ports; whilst in a very few months the enemy had been completely driven from the ocean. Short work had been made of the Kaiser's challenge to British sea power!

For years before the outbreak of war, not only had there been this continual increase in the strength of the Fleet, but changes were coming about in our naval arrangements which clearly indicated that the Government and Admiralty were taking precautions against danger from a new quarter. The Orkney Islands, Cromarty Firth, and the Firth of Forth began to see more of the British Fleet than Dover, Spithead, Portland and Plymouth. The North Sea rather than the Channel seemed to occupy the thoughts of British admirals. Yet, we are told that no thought of the possibility of war with Germany had crossed the minds of Ministers till the bolt fell from the blue in August, 1914.

As regards the army, the position of the nation, and the needs and desires of the nation were, and have always been, altogether different. The security of the nation did not necessitate our having a larger or more powerful army than any of our rivals; and though absolute unanimity on the subject had not been reached there was a general consensus of opinion that we should not aim at the creation of an army of Continental dimensions; but rather give our efforts to the maintenance of what in the eyes of Germans, and Frenchmen and Russians would be, in point of numbers, a very small army, yet one capable of rapid expansion on an emergency, of protecting imperial rights and interests in British possessions beyond the seas, and of throwing if need be, a well-equipped and powerful "expeditionary force" at short notice on any coast where its intervention seemed desirable.

It is by no means certain that history when it comes to deal with the events of the present day will pronounce a censure on that British ideal of imperial defence on sea and land which had commended itself to British statesmen. But it is quite certain that very much had to be done before their ideal could be thoroughly realised. At the Admiralty Mr. Asquith firmly supported the demands made by Mr. McKenna and Mr. Winston Churchill for very large increases of our naval establishment, at an increase of expenditure denounced by a section of his own supporters. But the navy, being essentially a defensive force, Parliament has rarely shown a

grudging spirit in imposing on the taxpayers the heavy burdens that are asked for. What was asked for would undoubtedly be voted.

Rightly or wrongly, Parliament and people have always scanned the army estimates in a somewhat different spirit. In what manner is the army to be employed? There was practically universal agreement that the function of the navy in war was to destroy or render useless the naval power of the enemy, and to have his commerce at our mercy—in short, to obtain, and retain against him, the “dominion of the seas.” No one considered that an army was required to maintain a similar position of pre-eminence on land amongst other nations. Did we require an army of Continental proportions to resist an invasion? As to this there were no doubt different opinions; but the general belief prevailed that invasion of our shores on a very large scale was impossible unless the command of the sea were first won and kept by the enemy, who would then have it in his power to proceed against us by the much safer method of blockade. Hence it was generally accepted that our security depended on the adequacy of the Fleet, whilst an army at home sufficient to deal with a surprise landing of some eighty or ninety thousand men would meet the exigencies of the situation.

No British Government, however composed, would have been either willing or able to adopt Continental methods in organising our military machinery and establishment. Our circumstances and our needs were entirely different from those of Germany or Russia or France. Neither, *practically*, would it have been possible in years of peace to have increased the expenditure on the army in anything like the same proportion as was considered requisite with regard to the expenditure on the navy. If real practical good was to be done on the military side of our defensive system, it would not be by mere increase of numbers, so much as by reorganisation and utilisation of the materials and possibilities afforded us by our peculiar circumstances and situation. It might even be found that in order to increase the efficiency of our striking force it would be desirable to curtail in less essential directions both numbers and outlay. Experience

has always shown that to make great improvements and carry far going reforms in our military system and organisation, immense resistance has to be overcome and much prejudiced censure has to be faced. Those whose recollections go back as far as the great army reforms accomplished by the Gladstone Government of 1868, after the Franco-German War had opened our eyes to some of the deficiencies of our old system, will remember the denunciations hurled against Mr. Cardwell, who, assisted by Sir Garnet Wolseley and some of the best heads in the army, succeeded, in spite of much professional and general clamour, in carrying reforms for which the next generation of soldiers had nothing but the highest praise.

It is not intended here to discuss in any detail the work accomplished for the navy and the army in the years preceding the war. What was actually done by both services is the best testimony to the exertions of the Admiralty and the War Office during those years. The readiness of the navy and army to do the work for which they had been prepared stands revealed to the whole world. Talk of "stagnation" in the preparations of the nation for war! And then turn to the *facts*—the sailing of the Fleet for the North Sea within a few hours of the declaration of war, and the landing of an expeditionary force of 160,000 men in the north of France (incomparably the finest and best equipped and supplied, as well as much the largest army that ever left our shores) in less than a fortnight. Had Sir John Jellicoe and Sir John French not been ready to respond at once to the call made upon them what would have been the fate of the Allies? And this readiness was due to the previous patient work of years, the thinking out beforehand of many difficult problems, to arrangements of the most elaborate detail. Not a single man was lost in transferring the British army to France. No! Mr. Oliver! such things are not done on the spur of the moment, without preparation, by men who never contemplated the possibility of war!

Half a dozen years earlier such achievement would have been beyond our power. Indeed, what was then *aimed* at was the being ready to dispatch at short notice a force only a



quarter the size of the army actually sent to France by Lord Kitchener in August, 1914. In the meantime Lord Haldane had done great things. The creation of an Imperial Staff, the forming of an Officers' Training Corps, the preparation of an expeditionary force, was work accomplished during Lord Haldane's reign at the War Office. More than all, he made out of the old "Volunteers" a real "Territorial Army." No one is better qualified than Lord French to estimate the value of this work, and the words of the Field Marshal, after two years of commanding the British armies in France, are worth quoting. "It was reserved for Lord Haldane to bring the Volunteers to the zenith of their reputation and value. The nation is indeed deeply indebted to the determined energy, skill and foresight of that great and distinguished statesman. It was he who saw the real use to which they might be turned, and the general result was that, though remaining Volunteers, they were turned into that great territorial army, the conception of which was surely one of the greatest strokes of genius any statesman ever exhibited."

It does not appear probable that history will endorse the sweeping censures of the "Ordeal by Battle" on British policy, or on the patriotism and intelligence of British statesmen. That war ultimately broke out in spite of British efforts to prevent it will not be held to condemn our Foreign Office, whose increasing distrust of Germany did not cause it at once to make war certain by despairing of the maintenance of European peace. Germany has to thank her own conduct and the ever increasing threat of her armaments for the growing warmth of the *Entente*. And all this time our own defence was becoming stronger and stronger, so that in August, 1914, in magnitude and efficiency there could be no comparison between the fleet and army that then went forth to battle, and our armaments by sea and land at any previous period of our history. When things do not go well the natural instinct of Englishmen is to blame their own Government. In 1870 had Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville had any foresight and backbone there would have been no Franco-German War! Had Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward

Grey possessed ordinary political capacity there would have been no rupture of European peace in 1914 ! We are even worse off now than we were then, for this terrible democratic wave has been steadily sweeping on, and the party system, the politicians and the lawyers have crushed out independent opinion and cramped the character of our public men. To whom can an unhappy kingdom and Empire turn for guidance ? “ Most politicians remain all their lives more unfit than any other class of man for governing a country.” A hard saying for the United States, for Great Britain, her Colonies and Dominions, amongst whom, nevertheless, the art and practice of Government has been not behind that of Prussia and Russia ! Sir Edward Grey (though a politician) is given credit for honest motives and even patriotism, but, unfortunately, the fact that he is a gentleman made him too “ credulous.” In his “ innocence ” he was still dreaming of peace when the Kaiser was at work on his war maps. If he had only known how, like that great War Lord, “ to rattle the sabre,” and take his stand in “ shining armour ” beside France and Russia, things would have been very different. This is all well put by Mr. Oliver, and represents very fairly the surface talk of the moment ; but these are not the views which recommend themselves to the better second thoughts of Englishmen, nor the judgment that history will finally pronounce on the conduct of our statesmen before the outbreak of war.

## CHAPTER VII

### BRITISH, GERMANS, AND METHODS OF WARFARE

Is the *Weltpolitik* of modern Germany merely an expression for that old instinct of Teutonic peoples for spreading outwards beyond limits that were proving too confined for a growing nation? Even so, a settled and civilised world is not a fit arena for the revival of a *Volkswanderung*, or for renewing the exploits of Hengist and Horsa. The rest of the civilised world naturally resents, and will effectually resist, their violent expropriation by German conquerors from territory already occupied by other nations. Till four years ago there were undoubtedly in all classes in Germany some men who intensely disliked the idea of war with England. Unfortunately the war party prevailed, and when war broke out, Germany was united as one man. Dr. Holland Rose in early days rightly warned us to face the facts, viz., that our war with Germany is one of "people<sup>1</sup> against people," a very different matter from a war due only to the Kaiser and a few wicked persons at Berlin.

After nearly four years of war, undoubtedly the feeling of hatred on each side between Germans and British has become very deep indeed; but most assuredly so far as this country is concerned, the war was not caused by any general popular antipathy here to Germany or Germans. There was some commercial rivalry, foolishly fanned into hostility by those who saw in the prosperity of another nation a necessary injury to their own. But the new commercial doctrines preached in England were not specially anti-German; and the grand economical device of "taxing the foreigner" in order to lighten the burdens on our own shoulders would have drawn from the pockets of our present allies a far larger sum than from those who are now our foes. Amongst

<sup>1</sup> "The Origin of the War," by J. Holland Rose.

influential men in Germany it is on the other hand impossible to deny that the feeling of hostility towards Great Britain as the chief obstacle to Germany taking what they considered her proper place in the world was so strong as to amount almost to a passion, and these men have made it their business to stir popular hatred and fear of Great Britain by representing it as her deliberate policy to encircle Germany in a ring fence so that expansion for her growing population would become impossible, and even to spread the belief that Great Britain was merely waiting her opportunity to fall upon the German Fleet and destroy for ever her rivalry in sea power and world commerce.

This was not the case, and there were in England not a few, who in their younger days or later in life had mixed much with Germans, and who regarded with something like horror a national or racial antagonism springing up between peoples whose friendly relations seemed to them to be of the utmost importance both to themselves and the world. To the labours of Lord Avebury and Sir Henry Roscoe, and no politicians were more respected, reference has been made. They did their best in both countries to deprecate the violent language, too common on both sides, which they rightly thought served only the unhappy purpose of exasperating popular passions. Language of this sort in England did not in their view truly represent the sentiment of the sober portion of the British public, and against it, when used either in England or Germany, they felt it their duty to protest.

The very remarkable letter of August 26th, 1914, to Professor Harnack, from a group of British theologians who felt themselves under the deepest obligations to German teachers and leaders of thought, well expresses the then sentiments of a far larger circle of the educated community than that for which they formally spoke. How could Professor Harnack, they asked, have been betrayed into describing "the conduct of Great Britain in the present war as that of a traitor to civilisation?" And they proceed to point out why it is that, though they owe much personally and professionally to Germany, they feel it is their "duty



to support the British Government in its declaration of war against the land and people they love so well." In the war, they go on to state, that they were not moved by a sentiment of national preference for Frenchmen and Russians over Germans. "Next to the peoples that speak the English tongue, there is no people in the world that stands so high in their affection and admiration as the people of Germany. Some of them had studied in German universities. Others had enjoyed warm personal friendship with Germans. All of them owed an immeasurable debt to German theology, philosophy, and literature. . . . Nor had they the remotest sympathy with any desire to isolate Germany, or to restrict her legitimate expansion, commercial and colonial. They had borne resolute witness against the endeavour made by foes of Germany to foment anti-German suspicion and ill-will in the minds of their countrymen. But they recognise that all hopes of settled peace between the nations, and indeed of any civilised relations between the nations, rests on the maintenance inviolate of the sanctity of 'treaty obligations.' They can never hope to put law for war if solemn international compacts can be torn up at the will of any Power involved. These obligations are felt by them to be the more stringently binding in the case of guaranteed neutrality. For the steady extension of neutralisation appeared to them to be one of the surest ways of the progressive elimination of war from the face of the earth." All the more do they say this when the treaty rights of a small people are threatened by a great World Power. "We, therefore, believe that when Germany refused to respect the neutrality of Belgium, which she herself had guaranteed, Great Britain had no option either in international law or in Christian ethics but to defend the people of Belgium." The letter then proceeds to denounce the Imperial Chancellor's excuse of necessity—"the tyrant's plea"—and to repeat "that in this conflict which cuts them to the very quick Great Britain is fighting for conscience, justice, Europe, humanity and lasting peace. . . . It is not" (they say to Professor Harnack) "our country that has incurred the odium of being a traitor to civilisation or to the conscience of

humanity. Doubtless you read the facts of the situation quite differently. You may think us entirely mistaken. But we desire to assure you as fellow Christians and fellow theologians that our motives are not open to the charge that has been made. . . ." The letter was signed by various principals and professors of independent theological colleges and divinity schools, and other representatives of Free Churches in England, and it well represents the pre-war feeling about Germany amongst a large portion of the more educated serious sections of the British public.

There were also in the world of business close relations between Englishmen and Germans, in which both were sharing the same interests, often embarking joint capital, and working for the same ends. It is often forgotten that trade and commerce depend on transactions between *individuals* rather than between nations. As regards certain great trades very profitable to both Great Britain and Germany there was naturally much co-operation between British and German citizens. In London and other great towns for generations past young Germans had come to make their fortunes, and in so doing had benefited the country that received them. Very frequently they came to stay, and their descendants have in many cases contributed not a little to the welfare of the country of their adoption. Until the threatening attitude assumed by the German war party a few years ago, it would be the grossest misrepresentation to talk of racial antipathy having generally existed between Englishmen and Germans. This is in fact mere "war talk," natural and inevitable in times of passionate excitement and hostility; but not to be taken as expressing the permanent thoughts and beliefs and feelings of the sober portion of the British people, nor, it is to be hoped, of the German people either.

The indignation caused by the monstrous attack upon Belgium at once opened the eyes even of those hitherto most willing to believe in German pretensions to pre-eminence amongst the nations in civilisation and political character.

Was, then, morality to be left out, and ordinary good faith to be cast aside, by those who controlled the greatest

military power in Europe and in the world? If so other nations must for their own sakes beware. The German people may, as a whole, have been misdirected and deceived by their rulers and leaders, but they cannot be absolved from all responsibility; and they have ratified with unanimity and enthusiasm the most indefensible, immoral, and outrageous proceedings of their Government. The brutal methods by which German violation of Belgian rights were enforced with the sanction of the highest military and imperial authority could not but unite all Englishmen, whatever may have been their previous sentiments towards the German race, in a feeling of absolute horror and detestation for a nation which could perpetrate and condone such crimes.

This was not all, for as the war proceeded Englishmen became better acquainted with the aspirations and intentions of many German statesmen and writers of influence, of the steady growth of the war party, and the ascendancy of "militarism" in directing the policy of the Empire. They became aware that a people whom till very lately they had looked upon as friends were now under the guidance of men who had long aimed at the destruction of the British Empire as an obstacle to their own world power. They saw, thanks to the honourable and high-minded conduct of their own foreign affairs, and the frankness with which it had been placed before the public, that the German pretension of waging a defensive war was absolutely baseless. When, in addition to all this, men read in the daily papers the accounts of the manner in which the Germans made war it can be no matter of surprise that British public opinion came quickly to see in the Germans a nation of savages—to think of them, and to speak of them, as "The Huns."

In former times no career was accounted in public estimation so honourable as the soldier's, and on the whole amongst European nations a high professional standard of military honour *did* prevail—ideas of fair play, of generosity towards the vanquished, of the odiousness of cruelty and treachery, of a certain chivalry between fighting men. Moreover, there can hardly be any doubt that recent generations have seen

a great increase in human sympathy for suffering, and in the desire to prevent or diminish it. In this country especially there has been apparent in every direction a humaner spirit than of yore influencing both the action of the State and of private citizens and affecting our legislation, and it might have been supposed beforehand that in modern wars between the most civilised nations of the world the growth of such sentiments would have been conspicuous.

War in itself is no doubt necessarily a cruel business. "Don't talk to me," the late Sir Wilfrid Lawson used to say, "about civilised warfare. You might as well speak of temperate drunkenness!" With him warfare and civilisation were incompatible. Nevertheless the warfare between civilised nations had in fact come to be conducted on much humaner principles than the war between savage races or the nations of antiquity, and than those of the Middle Ages. Does the experience of these four dreary years of modern warfare compel us to believe that the world has retrograded in those higher and nobler feelings of humanity, where advance had been most undoubted? Surely not! And the immense efforts made in the present world war by ourselves, our allies, and the enemy—the determination to spare nothing that can be done to alleviate the sufferings of sick and wounded are some evidence to the contrary. As between actual combatants on the two sides, there can hardly be, now that the profession of arms has given place to wholesale compulsory national service, the understanding and recognition of each other as soldiers hostilely engaged in honourable warfare, which once largely existed. Men, who should know better, preach race hatred as if it were patriotism; and whole races, rather than their champions—professional armies—are encouraged to fight out their wars to the length of extermination.

Not only has there been in the present war little exhibition of chivalrous sentiment between the two sides, but former practices, such as the regular exchange of prisoners, and the release of officers on parole, tending to lessen hardship, have been discontinued. Among European nations the Germans, especially the Prussians, have never borne a high character



for their methods of conducting war. It is a matter of course that every nation always accuses the enemy of exceptional cruelty and barbarity ; and any one who has the slightest acquaintance with our contemporary literature of the Napoleonic or Crimean periods is aware of the charges of savagery habitually made against our foes—Frenchmen or Russians. But the Prussians were our friends against Napoleon ; yet the many English travellers who visited Belgium and France after Waterloo give a melancholy picture of the behaviour of the Prussian troops in the country they had overrun, and Frenchmen would have had much more cause to rue the Allied occupation of Paris had Blücher not been held in check by the Duke of Wellington. In other ways letters of that date are of interest in indicating contemporary feeling. In the Wordsworth family, apparently, it seems to have been held that Napoleon might well have been executed for the murder of the Duc d'Enghien and other crimes, instead of being sent to Elba with a handsome pension ; and Southey after Waterloo, writing with appreciation of the sentiment he found prevalent amongst the Belgian peasantry, almost reached the opinion that the British should have insisted on shooting Napoleon when he fell into their hands for all the miseries he had brought upon the world by his escape from Elba.

It is probable that the introduction of new means of human destruction have tended to change for the worse old standards of honourable warfare. Submarines and mines, poisonous gas, zeppelins and aeroplanes, and the uses to which these inventions are put, do not fit in well with the stories we have heard from our youth of the heroic fighting days in the Peninsular War, or under Nelson, or read in the pages of Marryat ! Englishmen have always liked what seemed to them a fair fight, whilst repudiating methods of destruction which bear kinship to assassination. The statesman, William Windham, a very typical Englishman in these ways—a great patron of the ring whilst one of the most cultivated of men—would have nothing to say to a machine newly invented and offered to him as War Minister for wholesale blowing up of ships. “ I deprecate such a measure of

warfare as bad in itself ; and one by which we should have much more to lose than to gain." <sup>1</sup>

The submarine is a French invention, poison gas wholly and characteristically German. But whatever nation invents new machinery of destruction, all the other nations at once compete as to who can render it still more destructive and detestable. In these days of later civilisation "villainous salt-petre" has been far surpassed by novel instrumentalities for "cowardly" human slaughter. According to the principles preached in Germany all means and measures are permissible and laudable in war which tend to the destruction of the enemy.<sup>2</sup> In German eyes there is no other test than efficiency. The professors and writers of the Germany of to-day—the self-styled leaders of civilisation—do not compare well, so far as morals are concerned, with the patrons of the English prize-ring a century and a half ago ! It has often been found impossible unfortunately, in all armies, to restrain men who are maddened with passion from wreaking vengeance on innocent people and committing brutal savageries on the defenceless. But German ruthlessness has been due to deliberate policy, has been condoned and even prescribed by high authority ; and several times, as in the case of Captain Fryatt, deliberate murder in cold blood has been resorted to through the instrumentality of judicial proceedings where the Government has thought it would help them to instil fear amongst their enemies. In all charges of alleged savagery a great distinction is to be drawn between crimes of individual violence and those perpetrated in pursuance of policy by the agents of the National Government, and under its authority. For the latter, the guilt and the shame rightly fall upon the nation itself. They are national crimes ; and the nation itself is paying for them in the detestation which they have brought upon the German race throughout the world.

<sup>1</sup> "Windham Papers," Vol. II., p. 334.

<sup>2</sup> See "The German War Book"—the usages of war, published by the German General Staff, and translated with an introduction by J. H. Morgan, M.A., 1915.

It could not but be so. Nevertheless race hatred in itself is a bad thing, whatever causes may have generated it. For a generation and more the average Englishman hated the Frenchman, and the average Frenchman reciprocated, though of course in each nation there were always men who rose superior to the popular passion and fury of the time. Charges of treachery, cruelty, violence of all sorts were mutually made and invariably believed ; and the accounts of English travellers on the Continent after the peace are almost pathetic in the simplicity with which they record their impression that Frenchmen after all were really not savages, notwithstanding all the bloodguiltiness of the Revolution, and the horrible excesses of the Napoleonic Wars ! All this is due to national psychology in time of war. The belief that there is some intrinsic wickedness, inherited in Gothic or Teutonic blood is not one that can very long survive the restoration of peace and the renewed knowledge of each other that peaceful relations must ultimately bring about. Then, too, each nation will be able to take a truer view of transactions that have occurred than when each is animated with a desire to increase the enormity of the other's misconduct. An example of this may be seen in the customary accounts published in each country of British and of German air raids. " Military mischief " is not recorded in the newspapers, for this might encourage the enemy ; but casualties amongst civilians, especially amongst women and children, are fully recounted, whilst half a battalion of soldiers might be destroyed and nothing be said about it ! And thus the belief is propagated that the *object* of the enemy is to " war on women and on boys " and a cry has been actually raised amongst us for retaliation in kind.

The tendency of modern warfare seems to be to throw, in greater degree than formerly, the danger and many of the hardships of the war on non-combatants. The fighting air services have almost made an end of the distinction between open and fortified towns. An open town, ready to surrender, would formerly have escaped bombardment. Practically every town in England (we have no fortified

towns away from the coast) is occupied by soldiers. Even if they would, how could such places surrender to an aeroplane? Similarly with a large merchant ship of an enemy attacked by a submarine which cannot put on board a prize crew. In either case capture is impossible, destruction easy; and those who suffer most are not the fighting men. But perhaps the greatest change of all has come about in regard to the doctrine and practice as to siege and blockade caused by modern developments of national life and mutual intercourse between nations as well as by the introduction of new instruments of war.

The horror of the suffering caused by the reduction of a fortress or an army by starvation has naturally been greatest, when along with the besieged troops a huge civilian population with the women and children have been confined. The siege of a Gibraltar or a Ladysmith seems to stand on a different footing from the Prussian siege of Paris of 1870-71. An operation of that sort on such a scale had never before been seen in modern war. And it is not surprising that the besieging and bombarding of the splendid capital of France should have called forth vigorous denunciation of a recurrence to barbarism from contemporary writers. Yet if war is permissible at all, such a measure as the capture of the enemy's capital cannot be forbidden. In the present war the military and naval operations of belligerents have been on a scale never dreamt of in the past; and even the operations during the Franco-German War were small in comparison.

Blockade of the enemy's ports so that no kind of supplies or merchandise should reach him by sea was the natural expedient to which, when war broke out, Great Britain and her Allies at once had recourse. There was nothing novel, nothing unrecognised by international law and the general practice in such action. But the circumstances of belligerents, and the conditions under which modern nations live, have become very different from those that formerly prevailed. Nations are now largely dependent on foreign sources for their supply even of necessities. At the same time railway development has facilitated commercial traffic



by land to such an extent that the mere closing of the sea-ports of a Continental enemy will not suffice to cut off supplies from a nation whose neutral neighbours possess a sea coast and harbours of their own. *Primâ facie* the Allies had no right to prevent such neutrals from trading with every part of the world, subject only to the risk they ran in carrying to an enemy by sea munitions or other contraband of war liable to seizure. Dutchmen were, of course, as much entitled to supply Germany with arms or anything else of which she was in need as we were to supply ourselves with all that we needed from America. The same law applied to both belligerents—to Great Britain and to Germany. But their position in fact was very different, for the sea power of the former enabled her to seize contraband destined for her enemy (and to “contraband” is now given a widely extended meaning), whilst by naval blockade she could prevent any goods of any kind reaching German ports. If the world sees another Hague Conference new definitions may become necessary. “Blockade,” “Contraband of War,” “Continuous Voyage,” the terms of the Treaty of Paris of 1856, and much else will have to be considered and redefined, not to mention the still more fundamental question of the *sanction* for international laws, which at present any powerful belligerent can disregard with impunity.

The Germans, largely successful on land, very soon felt the pinch that the sea power of the Allies inflicted upon them. They realised that it might lead to national starvation; and the answer of the Allies that their proceedings were strictly *en règle* and in conformity with accepted doctrines of international law did not satisfy them. If there was anything barbarous in starving out Paris nearly half a century ago, was it not infinitely worse, they asked, to reduce to starvation the whole population of the Central Empires, and compel their manhood to yield by the sufferings imposed on women and children? They determined to have recourse to what they considered a counter-blockade of their own, the means for which they imagined they had found in modern inventions—in the submarine, the torpedo, and the mine. These, employed with sufficient “ruthlessness” and

disregard for all the horror and sufferings they would cause, would bring Great Britain to her knees in a very few months' time. It was the old dream of Napoleon. Once isolate the Island State, which lived on commerce, from all traffic with the rest of Europe and her power would have passed away. Such was his ascendancy through the might of his all-conquering arms that he did practically close against British shipping for a time every port on the Continent from the mouth of the Elbe to the south of Italy. Some three years later his "continental system" was still further developed, for he declared a blockade of the British coasts and forbade all political and commercial relations between the Continent and England. In his own words, "the sea must be subdued by the land," and as Dr. Holland Rose says there is a certain grandeur in the conception whatever may be thought of the means adopted. "Granted that Britannia ruled the waves, yet Napoleon ruled the land, and the land as the active fruitful element must overpower the barren sea. Such was the notion. It was fallacious; but it appealed strongly to the French imagination as providing an infallible means of humbling the traditional foe."<sup>1</sup>

So, more than a century later, the hearts of the Kaiser and his people were cheered by the hopes they placed in another blockade of the British Islands, whilst he—the leader of invincible armies—was to hold the Continent at his mercy. The submarine and the mine were the means by which the ends of Napoleon would at last be accomplished; military power would rule the destinies of Continental Europe, and that "Mighty Voice" of the sea, so long uplifted on the side of freedom, would be for ever silenced.

It may, perhaps, be a question whether the introduction of new instruments and machinery of war has ever sufficed to alter greatly and permanently the relative power of nations. Military authorities hold that the introduction of the breech-loader played a much smaller part in the Prussian victories in the Seven Weeks' War than has often been supposed. At the commencement of the Franco-German War, Parisian journalists and caricaturists rejoiced in

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Napoleon," by Dr. Holland Rose, Vol. II.

anticipation over the havoc to be wrought by their newly-invented "mitrailleuse," before which the enemy, like the hosts of Sennacherib, were to melt away as the snow. It is by no means certain that such vast changes in warfare as have been brought about even by the introduction of gun-powder and of steamships have changed the relative values of the armed strength of nations. Unless, indeed, it was the apparatus of the naval boarding-bridge that enabled the Romans to master the sea power of the Carthaginians, and that is some time ago, it is not easy to find a precedent to encourage the Kaiser in the belief that a new machine will ultimately prove a death blow to the sea power of his most formidable foe.

However this may be, some consequences of the new method of working the old Continental system have resulted which are little to the advantage of the nation that has adopted it. Granted that heavy losses have been inflicted on the merchant shipping of the Allies, and that the operations of their navies have been greatly hampered, the new system at once made it clear that in her attempt in this way to destroy Great Britain Germany was virtually attacking the whole world. Now, Napoleon, when he tried the same game and failed, had, nevertheless, in his hands far stronger cards for playing it than has the Kaiser to-day. The former had been so successful militarily on land that Europe had perforce to obey his commands, whilst the latter could not afford to drive beyond a certain point of irritation the remaining independent neutral countries of Europe, however much they might naturally enough tremble at his frown. To starve out the British Empire involved the destruction not only of British shipping and that of her Allies, but of all neutral shipping as well trading with any part of that Empire or with her Allies. At the head of the neutral nations of the world stood the United States of America, a Power historically attached to the cause of peace, and of non-intervention in European wars, but without any fear whatever of the military tyrant of the Continent.

The President of the American Republic did not hesitate, when the time came to do his duty, to summon Congress,

and to advise war, declaring in his address (April 2nd, 1917) that the German policy had now swept away all those meagre precautions that had hitherto been supposed to limit a cruel and unmanly method of conducting war. "Vessels of every kind, whatever their flag, character, cargo, destination or errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning, without thought of help or mercy for those on board—vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of belligerents. Even hospital ships carrying relief to the sorely bereaved and stricken people of Belgium, though the latter were provided with a safe conduct through the prescribed areas by the German Government itself, and were distinguished by unmistakable marks of identity, were sunk with the same reckless lack of compassion. The present German warfare against commerce is warfare against mankind. It is a *war against all nations*."

Thus the immediate effect of the policy of blockade, enforced by the reckless use of the new instruments of warfare, was to open the eyes of neutral countries to the fact that their rights and interests were concerned in only a less degree than those of the British Empire and her Allies in striking down the Power which by such means sought universal domination. And this was not all, for besides the utter disregard shown by the Germans for the rights and interests of all other nations, the ordinary feelings of common humanity had been outraged by the systematic savagery by which they hoped to intimidate their foes and all who were unfortunate enough to be in their power. These seem sufficient reasons to account for the fact that there now stand ranged against the German, the Austrian, and the Turkish Empires, almost the whole of the civilised world. If the contest between the sea and the land has to be fought out, it is the former in the meantime that keeps the best company!

To blockade, to besiege and cut off the supplies, and reduce to surrender by starvation a great fortress or port is one thing—known as an operation of war from the earliest times. To treat in the same fashion Great Britain or the British Empire is a very different matter. It will surely end in failure. On the other hand, can a policy of blockade prevail against the



widespreading and rich countries of Europe controlled by Germany and her Allies ? That remains to be seen. Hitherto history has certainly never yet presented us with an example on so portentous a scale of the successful starving into surrender of whole combinations of nations at once. From Ostend to the Black Sea, from the Baltic to Trieste the Teutonic and Turkish armies hold possession of the Continent. The British naval blockade no doubt greatly inconveniences them, and may even help in the course of years to bring about exhaustion ; but as for compelling them to surrender within a limited time by starvation, as Paris was forced to surrender in 1871, the prospects seem far from hopeful. Should this grand blockade succeed, it will afford a greater triumph than any yet achieved in the great struggle of the sea against the land.

In any event such a struggle as this must mean a war *à outrance* between nations. Neither Germans nor British would suffer themselves to be starved to death without availing themselves of every means at their disposal to strike at their enemies and save their own lives. In the light of modern warfare and in German eyes Great Britain is a fortress and its garrison is the whole population. If, therefore, either enemy or neutral ships, men-of-war or merchantmen, are found throwing in supplies they should be treated alike and sent to the bottom, say the Germans, by any means Germany has it in her power to use.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CHANGES AT HOME

No war in which Great Britain has been engaged in the past has had such a mighty effect as the present one upon our whole system of government at home. For the time being it is hardly too much to say that Constitutional Government is in suspension. During the Napoleonic Wars the executive government sometimes had recourse to high-handed measures ; but it was frequently held in check, either by the watchfulness and ability of the statesmen who led the Opposition in Parliament, or by the free play of other parts of our institutions, such as trial by jury, which was not interfered with. The British nation of those days set a fine and, indeed, splendid example to their posterity. The country and Europe were saved ; victory was gained, and our free institutions preserved. With all its care for freedom and individual liberty, for a free press, for outspoken criticism of those who govern, the nation has always shown itself an eminently practical one. In times of trial it has understood how to preserve order. In the right place it sets a high value on discipline.

“Britons never swerve  
From Law however stern that serves their strength to nerve.”

Possibly the nation may be right in thinking at the present day that the elementary rights of Englishmen, as they conceive them, cannot really be in permanent danger, and may safely leave to future Parliaments, when war is over, to re-establish the old freedom. Let us hope that it will be so. In this world *mélée* the first great essential in British eyes is to *win*. Till that matter is settled men do not want to hear about *habeas corpus* or *trial by jury* ; and they would

turn their backs in sheer disgust on any attempt to revive controversy on fiscal or franchise questions, or Disestablishment or Home Rule, or anything else. Let then those controversies be suspended till the union of all parties combined has given strength to the King's Government to carry the country through its dangers, and re-establish an honourable and secure peace. So it comes about that the Parliament elected in 1910 has been permitted by its own fiat to prolong its own existence till House of Commons and constituencies have long ceased to be in touch ; that it has to a very large extent surrendered its power of making laws into the hands of the Privy Council, of Ministers, of specified Boards, and Committees, and that it has for the time being practically ceased to exercise some of its chief functions in the control of the Executive Government.

Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, took a wise and patriotic step, though to him personally it must have been a painful one, in reconstructing his Ministry in May, 1915, involving loss of office to trusted and respected colleagues and life-long political friends, and their replacement by the leading men amongst his political opponents. There were two grounds which made such a proceeding desirable. It gave the country the means of uniting in its service the highest statesmanship and administrative talent that it possessed, and it gave to the country and world the strongest possible evidence that in the opinion of all our statesmen party predilections and considerations had been banished and that their efforts were bent solely on carrying on the war to a successful termination. Still Parliamentary arrangements can hardly have their full effect till they have been ratified by the electorate at a General Election, and the position of Mr. Asquith and the Ministry would have been a stronger one had he dissolved in the autumn of that year. With the feeling that prevailed in the country, a General Election in Great Britain would have passed off very quietly and harmoniously ; not one seat in ten would have been contested, Ministers would not have been required to stump the country or even for a day leave their offices, and in little over a week a new Parliament substantially would have been

elected. The British electorate, after all, has hitherto been composed of sensible men who for the most part feel their responsibilities and who fully realised the situation, and they would have dealt with it accordingly. In Ireland there might have been more difficulty ; but it does not seem probable that even there any harm would have resulted. The gain to the country as a whole would have been manifest, the House of Commons once more possessing a representative character, in consequence of its members having been elected with regard to an existing situation, and on the only issue about which the electorate took any interest. The Coalition Ministry, doubtless on grounds which seemed to them sufficient, took another view with the result that as time passed an appeal to the electorate became more and more difficult and therefore the prospect of a General Election more remote, the House of Commons less and less able to represent or act for the country, whilst Parliament necessarily became of less importance in controlling the political situation. If Parliament loses authority over the Executive Government, it follows that the Ministry in a country like ours which dislikes irresponsible bureaucracy, will fall more under influences of a less tangible kind, less openly exercised. If Parliament does not do so, it will be left to others to profess rightly or wrongly that they interpret the " voice of the people."

The political question, which for a time was discussed with some heat in the country, was whether recourse should be had to compulsory service for army and navy. And on each side grand principles were referred to, and a good deal of vituperative language employed against their opponents by the out-and-out advocates for the " Conscript " and the " Volunteer." It could not be a party question, for all our statesmen, Liberal and Conservative, had again and again declared against conscription. The word in the ears of most Englishmen had an ugly sound as the concomitant of Continental militarism. It was on the conscript system that Napoleon and Kaiser and Czar rested their power. Amongst us the spirit of the people might be relied on to fill the ranks of the fighting services with the very flower of British man-



hood ; and this seemed to be proved by the marvellous success of the volunteer system which in the present war called to the standard a very much larger number of recruits of the best sort than Lord Kitchener had asked for. The appeal of the King to his people was nobly made and nobly answered. This kind of thing suited our old ways far better, it was thought, than a statutory command by Parliament to join the ranks under pain of imprisonment. Thus to not a few Englishmen the resort to conscription appeared to involve the lowering of their ideals, and before accepting it they demanded proofs of its necessity. It is wiser to lead Englishmen than to drive them.

On the other hand, there were men not less patriotic who regarded legal compulsion with positive enthusiasm as the only means by which their ideal of a " Nation in Arms " could be realised. Amongst the ablest of them was Mr. Oliver, who, in the " Ordeal by Battle " before referred to, visited with the severest censure the blindness and incompetence of British statesmanship which had always refused to follow the Continental example. With him, the British pre-war army had no right to assert that its ranks were filled by those who had chosen the career of arms ; and he gives a luridly picturesque account of the way in which the " half-starved poor devil with hardly a rag to his back " was almost swindled into taking the King's shilling by an astute recruiting sergeant. Not, he goes on to say, that the recruit is much to be pitied. " These young men with empty bellies, and no very obvious way of filling them, except by violence—these lads with a gloom at their hearts, in many cases with a burden of shame weighing on them at having come into such a forlorn pass—in nine cases out of ten enlistment saves them ; perhaps in more even than that. But talk about compulsion and the voluntary principle ! What strikes the observer most about such a scene as this is certainly not anything which can be truly termed ' voluntary '—which is sometimes useful, in order to give a shock to good people who are tending towards self-righteousness in their worship of phrases—this is the compulsion of hunger and misery. It might even be contended that it was not only compulsion,

but a mean, sniggling kind of compulsion, taking advantage of a starving man." <sup>1</sup>

Probably no one seriously believes that this presents a true picture of the composition of the British army before 1916 ; of the kind of men who retreated from Mons, and who helped to drive back the Germans from the Marne ; or of those who in past times in every quarter of the globe have brought honour on the British name. In the eyes of Continental soldiers ours was a "mercenary army," not a "citizen army" or a "national army" ; and some excited controversialists in this country were foolish enough to use the same language, and to denounce as wanting in patriotism those who place more reliance than they themselves do on volunteers. For, as in all keen controversies, "self-righteousness" was not confined to one side only ! Probably the line which Mr. Asquith took was the one which recommended itself to most common-sense people. With him the matter was not one of political principle at all, but rather one of expediency—of the highest political expediency. The question could not be concluded on the one side or the other by resounding claims of the right of the State to the services of all citizens, or to that of the individual citizen to personal freedom of conscience, and the right to live his own life at peace with all men. The question to be decided rather, was what, at a time of great national danger, the safety of the State required. What were the actual necessities of the army to enable it to achieve victory ? Would adherence to the voluntary system, or recourse to compulsion, give the best results ? Like all English statesmen, in itself Mr. Asquith preferred the voluntary system to conscription ; and the former had been successful beyond all anticipation in its results. In some eleven months after the declaration of war two millions of men had been added to the army by voluntary enlistment from the United Kingdom alone. And less than a year after the Battle of the Marne General French was at the head of one million British troops in France drawn from all parts of the Empire.

The Coalition Government carried the Military Service

<sup>1</sup> "Ordeal by Battle," p. 382.

Acts without difficulty, owing in great part to the care taken by the Prime Minister to steady public opinion, as well as to lead it to practical results, and to the general knowledge of his own preference for free enlistment. In the Commonwealth of Australia less judgment was shown, and there compulsion proposed by the Australian Government was twice rejected on a referendum to the people. In New Zealand it was accepted. In Canada, where the conditions are different from those existing in other British colonies, the introduction of compulsion was bitterly opposed by a minority. It has now been carried by a large majority ; and it is to be hoped that the practical success of the policy will not be seriously diminished by any resulting revival of racial jealousies in the great Dominion. At home Parliament limited compulsion to Great Britain, Ireland remaining exempt. It is not surprising that this exemption has been sharply criticised in England and Scotland, and vehemently censured by the Unionists of Ireland. Was or was not Ireland, it was asked, part of the United Kingdom and the Empire ? Was not Ireland, as much as any part of the kingdom, indebted for its preservation to the fleet and the army ? Were Irishmen to stay at home in comfort, filling the places of better men than themselves, whilst their fellows were serving and dying in the trenches ?

It was indeed lamentable that the circumstances of Ireland, made it possible that such questions could be asked and meet with no satisfactory reply. But the Ministry, and the men who led the House of Commons, were practical statesmen ; and the difficulty *they* had to face was a somewhat different one from those suggested in the questions which seemed in the eyes of the newspapers and the man in the street to make the case for compulsion in Ireland complete. A compulsory law would answer in England and Scotland, because England and Scotland wanted it. In neither would it prove anything but a dismal failure if public opinion, and the voice of the immense majority of the representatives of either kingdom in the House of Commons, declared themselves vehemently against it. This was the case in regard to Ireland. To have included Ireland in the Military Service Acts would

have been to intensify and consolidate Irish Nationalism and disaffection ; to play into the hands of Irish extremists who, under various aliases—Fenian or Sinn Fein, or what not—have for very many years past aimed at the disruption of the United Kingdom, and the breaking up of the British Empire.

It is useless to hide our eyes to patent facts. As has happened often before, popular opinion and sympathies in a large part of Ireland, so far as the majority of the population are concerned, run on different lines from those that prevail in the rest of the Empire. To attempt to force people to serve as soldiers under the penalty of imprisonment, for a cause with which, to put it mildly, they had no sympathy, would have filled the Irish gaols with tens of thousands of objectors, and the ranks of the army with men whose hearts were fighting on the other side. The Government of Mr. Asquith did well to think twice before they forced conscription on Ireland by the sheer weight of English and Scottish votes.

The experiences of the last few years have necessarily tested severely in many ways the efficiency of our constitutional system of Government. They have shown the readiness of the British people to make, and continue to make, unprecedented sacrifices of their lives and property to secure a great national end. Both constitution and nation have stood the fiery trial well. As to our ordinary Government system it may possibly not compare well with those ideal and imaginary Governments which so many of our critics seem to have in mind. It has to work through human agencies. Occasionally mistakes will be made. It is not always in its power to employ genius either in the civil or military service of the State. Genius is at rare intervals the gift of the gods. But when our institutions and their working are compared with those of our own past, or with those of other nations in the present day, he must be a strangely constituted Englishman, who, in these respects and at the present time, deploras the condition of his own country. For a flexibility and an adaptability to change, even fundamental change in our system, for maintaining steadiness in the conduct of



Government ; above all in the power of calling out the whole energies of the people in support of those who lead it, it would not be easy to find an example of a more successful constitution than our own.

For the first two years of the war our critics spent much of their time in lecturing the British public for not "realising" that the nation was engaged in a tremendous struggle, and for making no adequate effort to assist our hard-pressed Allies, amongst whom this sort of writing aroused a good deal of not unnatural misapprehension, which it has been the business of some able writers, especially of Mrs. Humphry Ward (admirably performed), to remove. What more could the British people have done ? To every appeal for men or money the response was magnificent. Of course the state of things in September, 1914, in the case of France and of England, was very different as regards the nature of the appeal to the citizens of each country to fight for hearth and home. The Germans were not in occupation of Winchester and two or three counties, threatening an immediate march upon London ! Whatever might happen on the Continent, before serious invasion of Great Britain took place the Germans would have to deal with the British Fleet ! And every man that volunteered knew that he did so for foreign service, very possibly for very distant foreign service in remote parts of the globe, where unhealthy climate and hardships of every kind were likely to be his lot. The Englishman, the Australian, the Canadian, the New Zealander, voluntarily and enthusiastically responded to the appeal of the King, though their hearths and homes were not in immediate danger as in France. "England expects every man to do his duty." From the foot of the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square, and thence to every part of the Empire, the old signal of the great admiral once more went forth, followed with the advice, "Then do yours," and join the fighting services of the Crown.

A year after the Battle of the Marne Lord French had under his command in Flanders and France a million of men coming from every part of the Empire ; and in less than a year and a half from the beginning of the war, the fighting

men, sent to the colours by the United Kingdom alone, were nearly four millions. In willingness to tax themselves and to lend money to the State on a scale entirely without precedent in this or any other country, the nation showed not less patriotism. As regards the two first requisites for prolonged warfare—men and money—the people proved themselves ready at once, and with enthusiasm, to make every sacrifice that was asked of them. In truth the popular “realisation” of the necessities of the State was far truer and more understanding than the realisation by the majority of its critics of the sacrifices made in a vast number of cases by individual citizens. Either in the recruiting for the army or in the levying taxation, an exact “equality of sacrifice” between man and man can never be attained. In many cases to volunteer for the army is for a spirited young man to make no sacrifice at all, but rather to embark on a chosen line of life where the risks seem more than compensated by the prospects of adventure and distinction, and by the honour that attaches to the patriotic service of the State. In other cases where men had laid out their lives on other lines, were supporting themselves and their families, not too easily perhaps, by their active industry—labour, business, profession—where, in short, the man was the stay of the home, and often in more than being its breadwinner—the departure for years of dangerous foreign service in the army was a burden which must have weighed very heavily indeed. The Territorial Army was, of course, pre-eminently full of such men ; but no more than others did these men fail “to realise” the desperate necessity of their country, and to make whatever sacrifice might be asked of them.

Volunteering had proved astonishingly successful in providing men, and men of the best stamp, to fill the ranks of an army many times greater than the most urgent of pre-war conscriptionists had thought to be necessary. But as the duration of the war was prolonged, the country gradually became convinced that to ensure the regular and constant supply of men to the army, and the satisfactory carrying on of essential civil industries, and for providing for the necessary wants of army and navy, the whole people would require

to be organised. Lord Derby's patriotic energy achieved great results. The country, with very little demur, ultimately accepted compulsion in Great Britain, necessitating elaborate precautions to prevent men being drawn into the fighting ranks who were in truth performing other work hardly less essential, for which they were often much better fitted. The smallness of our army when it became necessary to undertake military operations on the Continental scale was evident, and at once therefore measures had to be taken, first of all by national volunteering, and after a couple of years by legal compulsion, to obtain the numbers required. More slowly did the nation come to learn the lesson that modern war was to teach them, as to the gigantic demands for munitions of all kinds and other military supplies with which armies in the field must be provided. Recent years have made the world acquainted with war on a scale hitherto undreamed of. The days when the institution of rifle clubs, a modicum of school drill, and the enlargement of one or two arsenals and dockyards were advocated as great and sufficient advances in our military preparations were long past ; and the nation at last was forced to accept the view that to succeed in the present war (which it *did* realise was a necessity of its own existence) the *whole* of its manhood must be called upon, and the *whole* of its industrial resources employed, after providing for the essential wants of the people, in recruiting our armies and in furnishing the fighting men with the vast equipment required. Land must be tilled, mines must be worked, clothing, boots, etc., must be manufactured, ships must be built, the transport services must be maintained ; and everything must be done so as to subserve the great national exigencies of the time. To a very large extent industrial England was to become a national workshop for providing munitions of war ; and Mr. Lloyd George may well be proud of the wonderful, almost miraculous achievements, which his own electrifying energies have done so much to inspire.

Mrs. Humphry Ward's little volumes have told in popular form the extent of those achievements. In full detail the story cannot yet be told. But we know enough to feel proud,

in spite of occasional hitches and misunderstandings, of the splendid co-operation of all classes in this national and patriotic work. In the meantime the nation has been making quite novel experiments in methods of government, rendered necessary by the extreme urgency of the times, and it may well be that when peace again returns to the earth our experience may prove to have left *lasting* consequences behind it, affecting our own permanent institutions and the principles and practice of our domestic politics.

It is certain that when the pressure of great urgency is removed by the re-establishment of peace, and the nation begins to take stock of its circumstances and to understand its position, it will be forced to "realise" as it has not yet done the distance that it has travelled in recent years almost unwittingly in the direction of extreme bureaucracy. At the same time great advances have been made towards extreme democracy. Extreme democracy, unfortunately, is by no means incompatible with the denial to the people of many of those privileges which Englishmen had become accustomed to regard as essential to individual freedom. In form, popular plebiscite, for instance, appears to recognise to the utmost degree democratic principle; but on this foundation we all know how absolutism has often built its power; and history has given us many examples where democratic forms have served to veil the fact that self-government has in truth passed from the people to those who are in no true sense its spokesmen or the interpreters of its will.

Four years ago it would have been difficult to imagine established in Great Britain a rigid Press Censorship; compulsory State service; legislation (except in matters of the merest detail) otherwise than by Parliament; the continued virtual suspension in many cases of *habeas corpus*; the prolongation by Parliament (the first salaried Parliament) of its own duration beyond the statutory limit; the peace in Ireland maintained by the presence of a large army, and by what is incorrectly described as "martial law"; a great severance effected between the Executive Government and the House of Commons to which it used to be responsible



even for details of administration ; the exclusion from the King's Cabinet of such Ministers as the Secretaries of State for War and Foreign Affairs, of the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Lord Chancellor ; the diminution if not the absolute termination of Treasury power to check and control expenditure ; the disassociation of Cabinet Ministers from the headship of the great departments of State ; a Prime Minister not leading, or even constantly attending, the House of Commons, of which he is a member.

Neither should we have believed it possible that we should see the prices of the most essential articles of food, such as bread and potatoes, meat and milk and sugar, fixed by the authority of the State ; nor the guarantee of an enormously high rate, as compared with the past, for several years, of the price of wheat and oats and barley. Such prices and guarantees having, of course, behind them, as security to render them effective, State credit—that is, the taxes. Have many or any of all these things, honestly and perhaps rightly introduced amongst us in response to a supposed necessity, come to stay ? Probably in some modified form or fashion not a little will remain, for men's minds during the late strenuous years have become attuned to new conceptions of the functions and the power of government ; and, moreover, the Government itself will be before long the servant of a new electorate less experienced than its predecessors and less able therefore to understand the limit which hard facts impose on the beneficial omnipotence of " the State."

It is this novel conception of the State as the universal provider, and of its relation to the individual citizen, that is not unlikely to effect a change of character in the political and social life of the country. At the present time a large proportion of the population is dependent on State pay, that is, it is living on the direct produce of the taxes. By the direct or indirect employment of these same taxes bread is made cheap to the consumer whilst the price of corn is to be kept high in order to remunerate and encourage the home grower. Mines, railways, shipping, land, drink, are falling more and more under the control of a " State " which will

be expected to regulate prices, wages, profits, hours of labour and social habits. That men are capable of managing such things for themselves better than "the State" can manage them—that men who are free to contract know best how to protect their own interests in the long run—is a doctrine of individualism little in favour at the present day. In the eyes of old-fashioned Liberals, on the other hand, "the State" is neither all wise nor omnipotent, and they fear that its efforts to play the part of Providence may lead to confusion and disaster.

It is a singular thing that whilst in men's minds the functions of the State become more exalted and universal, the human authorities through which its will is expressed seem to lose ground in general respect and confidence. Constitutionally there is no limit to the absolute power of Parliament—of King, Lords and Commons. They constitute "the State" and by constitutional custom the House of Commons has now acquired for itself nearly the whole power of Parliament, especially the authority to choose the Executive and to raise and appropriate supplies. The House of Commons, moreover, is that branch of the Constitution that has been constantly reformed with a view to making it more truly representative of the nation. It ought, therefore, considering its high functions and the efforts that have been made in the last three generations, to render it capable of performing them, to enjoy far more than its predecessors the general confidence and respect of the public. But is this the case?

It may be that during the stress of a tremendous war, parliamentary institutions never show at their best, though it would not be easy, as has been said, to show that other systems of government have on the whole worked much better. And certainly it is difficult to believe that when peace comes the House of Commons will not again assert itself as the authoritative exponent of the national voice and will. Still, during recent years, and especially during the currency of the present Parliament, the House of Commons has not maintained its old reputation. It seems to have lost in some degree its own self-respect, and Ministers

no longer treat it with the deference shown in former days by the most powerful statesmen to the wishes and feelings of the representatives of the people. Whilst this is so, it is vain to expect the general public to take a higher view of the merits and importance of that assembly than prevails within its own walls.

To whom, if not to Parliament, is the Ministry of the King to be responsible? The popular control of the Executive in this country through Parliament is far more direct and complete than that which exists under the constitution of the great American democracy, where the Government is largely independent of Congress. That may or may not be a better system than ours. It is, at all events, quite a different one, and to assimilate ours to it would involve a great lowering of the importance and dignity of Parliament. We are so habituated to our own system that we can hardly imagine a Government not immediately responsible to the nation's representatives; yet at the present time there appears to be in the public mind a *tendency* to depreciate the authority of Parliament whilst that of the Executive Government tends to increase. The control of Parliament over Executive diminishes, whilst the very real though intangible authority that the Government exercises over Parliament tends to increase.

On matters about which the country takes a deep and abiding interest public opinion has always, sooner or later, prevailed; and Parliament on the whole gave effective expression on great questions to the feeling of the people long before Reform Acts had regularised the relations between representatives and represented. Pitt, when a member for the little village of Appleby, or representing the Dons of the University of Cambridge, was as truly the representative of his country on all great issues as it is possible for any future M.P. to be, though he be elected by every man and woman in a population of "not less than 70,000"! After a time, classes excluded from the electorate, naturally and rightly, and to the immense advantage of Parliament and the nation, established their claim to direct representation in the House of Commons, which thereby became at once in some

sort, on all matters great and small, the nation itself in miniature, with the consequence that other parts of the legislature fell into the background.

If, therefore, the modern House of Commons should fail to respond to what the nation has a right to expect of it, where are we to turn? Where are we to find the authoritative expression of the national will? In the newspapers? But then in which newspapers? Anonymity, a very useful accompaniment of political criticism in the Press, prevents that attaching of responsibility for political action to individuals which is the best safeguard for the conduct of men who wield power. The daily Press, moreover, deals with the *day*. Every morning it starts with a clean sheet. It has forgotten yesterday; and as regards to-morrow and the day after, it will wait and see. What it says one day it can unsay the next. Most useful, and indeed essential, in criticising public men and national policy, it is quite unfit, from lack of all responsibility, to *govern*; and attempts which it may make in that direction are hardly likely to be beneficial.

It is dissatisfaction with, and distrust of, the House of Commons that has led to the call for a "referendum" to the electorate itself when legislative measures of great importance are in question. The scope of the proposal may be more or less limited. It may include "the initiative" and the substitution of the electorate itself as law maker for the legislative chamber; but whether it be small or sweeping the essence of the principle on which the proposal rests is the negation of representative government so far as legislation is concerned. It would be in fact a long step in the direction (in which we are very possibly moving) of dethroning Parliament in favour of direct government by the ballot box. Moreover, the adoption of such a proposal would necessarily have considerable effect indirectly in diminishing the authority of the representative chamber as regards its function of controlling the Executive Government.

No one who has had any practical acquaintance with political life in or out of Parliament can suppose that the representative system would give satisfactory results were the element of party altogether eliminated from British



politics. But very few would deny that that necessary concomitant of popular politics had been greatly abused, especially in recent times, so as to lower the respect for the House of Commons and the standard of political life throughout the country. By the spread and elaboration of the caucus system the independence of the electorate has been threatened, and the wishes of a constituency have often far less to do with providing it with its member, than the action of men at the centre who have their hands on the party machine. That is one of the dangers to which certain forms of democratic government are exposed. Whilst the nation is by way of being self-governing, the real power gets largely into the hands of the managers, manipulators, wire pullers, of the great party organisations, directed from central offices and assisted out of central funds. More probably in the future than in the past and present will an ambitious statesman make the management and control of party machinery and the manipulation of newspaper influences his principal means of achieving and retaining popular power.

The position of a representative of the people in Parliament has in recent years undergone considerable change both as regards his relations with his constituents and with the party leaders in the House of Commons acting through "the whips." For the most part the candidate makes his first appearance before a constituency armed with a letter of recommendation from the leader of the Government or of the Opposition, and often appears to pride himself on the skill with which he avoids giving the slightest indication of any individuality of character or opinion of his own which may lay him under the suspicion of desiring to be anything but a counter in the party game. Local choice and feeling, local estimation of a man's worth, have less to say than formerly to the selection of a candidate, whilst even at the election speechmaking and electioneering are largely done for him by men personally quite unknown to the constituency. That it is the business of the locality itself to conduct the election, rather than that of outside organisations is largely forgotten. The candidate, when returned, is, as often as not, under such obligations, pecuniary and otherwise, to his party as in

effect to put his vote and parliamentary action at the beck and call of the party whip. In olden days there were always a considerable number of men in the House of Commons whose support to the Government of the day was of great value to Ministers, but who owed nothing or very little to them, and who wanted nothing from them, and who had, therefore, to be considered and consulted. The tables are turned, and nowadays a Government's existence depends less on the opinions of M.P.'s than the existence of M.P.'s on the goodwill of the Government. Similar considerations apply, of course, to the Opposition and Ministerial sides of the House alike, the front Opposition Bench being in the opinion of its supporters a Government *in posse*, and possessing a like authority over its following.

The payment of a salary to members has, as our statesmen should have foreseen, done much to diminish the respect of the public for the House of Commons, and the mischief done in this way was increased by the manner in which the change was accomplished, viz., not by Act of Parliament, but by mere vote of the money by the members themselves for themselves. The special circumstances of the present time, moreover, when the public sees on all sides the voluntary sacrifice of private means for the benefit of the State, draw increased attention of an unflattering kind to the fact that the House of Commons now for the first time is dividing amongst its own members by its annual vote some £300,000 a year of the taxpayer's money. When besides all this the House shows itself unable to keep in their proper place those by no means numerous members who bring its proceedings into discredit, it is no matter of surprise that the great and ancient reputation of Parliament should suffer.

There have been two occasions during the currency of the present Parliament when the House of Commons might almost seem, at first sight, to have abandoned its great function of control of the Executive Government. It allowed to pass without censure the Government responsible for the Irish Rebellion in the spring of 1916, and it simply looked on, as if in no way concerned, with the change of Government in December, 1916. On each of these occasions,

however, the whole situation was abnormal. It was dominated by the extreme urgency imposed by the war, and probably no House of Commons would, or ought to have taken at that moment, any steps, however otherwise desirable, which would have increased the immediate difficulties of the country in carrying it on. Still, it remains deserving of notice that a change of Government took place at the end of 1916, rightly or wrongly, for other than parliamentary reasons or on grounds laid before the House of Commons. The outgoing Ministry had not, so far as the public knew, lost the confidence of the House of Commons ; and the House did not vote its confidence in its successor. Neither the approval of the House of Commons nor of the electorate was given or even asked for. The incoming Ministry had to rely on the forbearance and patriotism of the Ministers who had left office to do their best to assist the efforts of those who had replaced them, and this confidence was justified in the result. Seldom in the course of our parliamentary history has an English statesman shown greater magnanimity of character, more whole-hearted devotion to the interests of his country to the exclusion of every personal or party consideration, than has Mr. Asquith, whether in office or in opposition, throughout the years of trial and struggle from August, 1914, to the present time. It is not at every period that the country has been so well served by its statesmen ; a thing it is worth while to remember at a time when it is fashionable in many quarters to decry the whole race of modern " politicians."

Whether the diminished reputation and consequence of the House of Commons in our constitutional system is due to its own failings, to the permanently changed conditions of the time, or to the special and abnormal circumstances incidental to a period of a national life-and-death war-struggle, may be questioned. Probably these causes have all been in operation. However that may be, the fact that even for a time the House of Commons does not stand where it did must be full of consequence in the future. The tendency would appear to be towards the exaltation of the authority of the Executive Government at the expense of that of Parliament.

Old-fashioned Liberals indeed greatly dislike the idea of a powerful bureaucracy largely escaping, or becoming indifferent, to parliamentary criticism. Public criticism in a country such as ours there will, of course, always be ; but that of an anonymous and irresponsible Press will never be able to supply the place of the criticism of experienced statesmen in the House of Commons—statesmen who have a character to maintain and who feel that they themselves may become responsible for carrying their opinions and recommendations into effect. Parliament is nowadays the only arena where opposing political views meet face to face, where speeches are made in the presence of opponents ready and willing then and there to answer them, in the presence, moreover, of an assembly whose tradition and practice have always been to hear all sides. The atmosphere is very different and very superior to that of organised party meetings. All the shoutings from platform and Press can never prove a substitute for national public debate by the representatives of the people. If, moreover, there is danger to be faced in the future from a too powerful bureaucracy, it can only be because the House of Commons is failing to perform its proper part in the constitutional system ; and if the bureaucracy is to control, instead of being controlled by, Parliament, the prospect is dark indeed.

In the prolonged existence of the present Parliament the House of Commons has been a silent witness to very great changes in the practical working of our system of Government. In 1914 Mr. Asquith, with a large Liberal majority behind him, was, of course, Prime Minister of a purely Liberal Ministry. The Party System was in full vogue. On the declaration of war party considerations were in abeyance, and he at once appointed Lord Kitchener Secretary of State for War, without the latter's becoming in any way a member of his party or pledged to support its previous policy—a right and wise step, but nevertheless a new departure. In June, 1915, the Prime Minister reconstructed his Ministry on coalition principles, combining, it was hoped, in one powerful administration the most efficient and most trusted statesmen of both political



parties, therein following excellent precedents and setting a conspicuous example to the country of zealous combination in a single great cause of all the political elements of the nation. Directly and indirectly the Coalition Government did great work—greater perhaps than it has yet got credit for—and in history its achievements in a time of almost unexampled stress and danger will stand high. In December, 1916, came Mr. Asquith's resignation, and the Premiership of Mr. Lloyd George, under whom has been inaugurated a new system of government, the merits and demerits of which there has not yet been full time to test. For the time being the Cabinet, such as we have known it—the supreme council of the King upon whose advice he acts, and whose members were individually and collectively responsible for the conduct of the Executive—has changed its character. There is, of course, a War Secretary, a First Lord of the Admiralty, a Foreign Minister and a Lord Chancellor ; but these gentlemen are not members of the Cabinet, though it is to be presumed that they are occasionally consulted both by the Sovereign and the Prime Minister. They no longer form an essential and necessary part of the supreme governing council of the realm. Yet the departments these men represent, and by which they are assisted and informed, and which they direct, should surely have at their head statesmen in the inmost councils of the King !

As originally appointed in December, 1916, the Cabinet consisted of the Prime Minister and four colleagues. Mr. Lloyd George selected Lord Curzon and Lord Milner from amongst the peers, Mr. Henderson and Mr. Bonar Law from the House of Commons to join him. The Chancellor of the Exchequer (the only Minister representing a great State department) was to relieve the Prime Minister of the duty of leading the House of Commons, leaving to the latter more time to attend to imperial and war policy in the very anxious circumstances prevailing. Outside the Cabinet the tendency has been to introduce "men of business," or experts in special lines, into high political office, especially to control and manage the machinery necessitated by the taking over by the State from private hands of vast businesses and under-

takings and the performance of duties hitherto outside the field of political superintendence.

The ability of the men Mr. Lloyd George called to his assistance is beyond dispute. The *advice* of experts is essential. *Government* by experts is a different matter altogether. As advisers of those who govern they are all important. Difficulties have been great, and strange mistakes have been made which must surely have been avoided had there been proper consultations between the great departments, and the statesmen at the head of them been jointly taken into council. But on the other hand some extraordinarily difficult tasks have been accomplished, as for example, the rationing of the chief articles of food for the whole people.

There is no object to be gained by dwelling on the mistakes committed, but it is well to remember that experts are not infallible. Neither in civil nor in military matters are experts always agreed as to the right course to pursue. Perhaps some eminent statesmen in the past, inclined towards cynicism may, on this account, have rated their advice too lightly.

What the country needs in the supreme governing council of the realm are statesmen of varied experience whose ability is recognised and whose previous careers have won them the respect and confidence of the country. They should know something of *men* as well as of "business." When everything has been said that can be said against the "politician" it probably remains true in the present as it has done in the past that the best training for a British statesman is a career in the House of Commons, where he can hardly fail to learn much of his countrymen, and where they also—a matter of hardly less importance—get to know and to measure him.

## CHAPTER IX

### IRELAND AND THE WAR

WHATEVER may have been the ultimate object as regards this country of the policy of the German Kaiser and his advisers, it is certain that in 1914 they did not wish to add Great Britain to the number of their foes. They imagined they had sufficient reason for believing that intestine political difficulties and dissensions, actual and threatened, would keep the British Empire out of the conflict. They believed, and rightly, that the Ministers of the King, like those of his predecessors, greatly disliked the prospect of entering into a European war; and they knew that for a century past, though great wars had raged in Europe, the policy of Great Britain had been to observe a strict neutrality, except in the solitary instance of the war with Russia in 1854-55, a precedent to which also they knew that modern British opinion, rightly or wrongly, did not look back with much approval. Still, should war with Great Britain, in spite of all this, actually occur, it was the German belief that their enemy, the British Empire, was without national solidarity, and the British not being a homogeneous people, it would fall to pieces like a house of cards when the day of trial came. It would then prove no difficult task for Germany, through her wide-spread agencies, official and unofficial, to promote and assist the efforts of the enemies of her enemy to throw off the yoke which the German military mind could alone conceive as the *nexus* of such a world-wide Empire.

It was the fashion in many quarters in this country before and at the beginning of the war to contrast the efficiency of the German Foreign Office and its diplomacy with our own supposed slackness. Yet events have shown how little the Germans had learned of the conditions which prevailed at least in the two Anglo-Saxon Empires with which they were

to come into conflict. From their diplomatic agents and their spies they may have learned, perhaps, how to promote outrages and create riots ; but they remained in absolute ignorance of the real solidarity of feeling by which British subjects and American citizens were alike inspired. They believed, because there had been a Boer War, that British South Africa would be pro-German. They believed that India was honeycombed with sedition and that we should have to send there large armies to hold down the people. They believed that Germans and disloyal Irishmen in the United States would prevent the great American Republic from speaking and acting like a high-spirited nation. If it is a principal duty of a Foreign Office and its representatives to teach the Home Government to understand the conditions prevailing and the real sources of power in other rival nations, then there never was anything less efficient than the service rendered to the German Empire by its foreign department. Yet let us not lay the blame on agents, when the principals are at fault. The German Empire was not led in a spirit of statesmanship, by Ministers at home or abroad. It was governed at Berlin in a spirit of militarism which pervaded every part of the public service and which was always contemplating war. Soldiers, not statesmen led, or rather commanded, the German people.

It was an unpleasant surprise and probably utterly incomprehensible to Prussian Junkerdom to find Boer generals playing the principal part in driving Imperial Germany out of Africa ; to find India sending large armies to fight Germany and her Allies in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa ; to find that when the United States of America stamped her foot, disaffection—German or Irish—dissolved into thin space, and that American citizens constituted a great and undivided nation with almost unlimited military resources and financial means at its back.

It is a melancholy fact that in one direction only were German forecasts of this sort not entirely discredited by events. It is true that the situation in Ireland in July, 1914, though sufficiently critical, was not such as to prevent the British Empire from going to war with Germany as the



Kaiser and his friends had hoped ; but their anticipations that if war did come they might look to Ireland for very material assistance were shown to be by no means groundless.

In considering the events of the last four years, it is impossible to ignore the fact that in Ireland alone within the British Empire have the dangers to that Empire, instead of consolidating political differences into one sentiment of common patriotism, been regarded by no small portion of the people as an opportunity for rebellion against kingdom and Empire in alliance with German militarism ; and this notwithstanding the unspeakable crimes against humanity of which the latter had been guilty. Irish hostility has never made any secret of its intention to avail itself, when occasion served, of the assistance of the foreign foes of Great Britain. There was nothing new to Irish history in the German Sinn Fein conspiracy ; in the attempt to combine in Ireland a domestic rebellion with foreign invasion at a moment when the safety of the kingdom was in imminent danger from a powerful foe. Our enemy in the great French war recognised, as did our enemy in the present war, that the most vulnerable point of attack to which the British nation was exposed, was in Ireland. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, again and again were projects formed by our enemies to raise rebellion in Ireland, and send armies to its assistance, projects which resulted in little, owing to the power and vigilance of the British Fleet ; and to the fact that the supreme Executive in Great Britain was supreme also in Ireland, and responsible for the safety of the whole kingdom.

Whatever the reason for it may be, it has often been observed that when some strong popular emotion connected with events abroad has stirred Great Britain, there has been no kindred sympathy aroused in Ireland amongst the majority of the people. In the middle of last century the freedom and national consolidation of the Italian people and the admiration for Garibaldi, which deeply stirred the feelings of Englishmen, evoked no interest across the Irish Channel. Mr. Gladstone urged in 1886, when proposing that Ireland should cease to be represented in the House of

Commons at Westminster, that Irishmen (by which he must be presumed to have meant Irish Home Rulers for whom he was speaking) took no interest in foreign affairs, the direction of which might, therefore, well be left to Great Britain alone. A strange enough view ! Still it does seem to be the fact that when serious foreign complications arise, a large section of the Irish people seem to regard them merely as offering opportunities for gaining, by pressure, certain Irish ends at the expense of their fellow citizens in Great Britain, and of a large portion also of their own countrymen in Ireland. It is a singular circumstance that the criminal conduct of the Kaiser and the Germans towards Belgium, and all the enormities and inhumanities inflicted by them on that unfortunate people, have not prevented a large section of Irish opinion from espousing the German cause in the great world war.

Before the war had lasted three months negotiations had already begun between disaffected Irishmen in Ireland, their countrymen—avowed enemies of the British Empire—in America and the Germans. "It is clear that the Irish insurrection was caused by two bodies of men allied together for this purpose and known as the Irish Volunteers and the Citizen Army. It is now a matter of common notoriety that the Irish Volunteers have been in communication with the authorities in Germany, and were for a long time known to be supplied with money through Irish-American societies. This was so stated in public by Mr. John McNeill on November 8th, 1914. It was suspected long before the outbreak that some of the money came from German sources" (Report of Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland).

It is a melancholy fact, but it is useless and worse than useless to ignore it, that for many generations past extreme men in Ireland, enjoying no small amount of popularity, have been aiming at the overthrow of Great Britain, and the establishment of an entirely separate and distinct Irish nation on her flank ; that they regard the British as the enemies of Ireland and have been looking for an opportunity to seek their ends by force of arms. Fenians, Parnellites, Sinn Fein, let them call themselves what they will, the extreme men among them have had throughout before them the same

end and object.<sup>1</sup> About the best means of effecting their object, they have no doubt differed. Times and occasions, as well as ends, have to be considered. Even the same man to different audiences holds quite different language. Still, to people who are not blind, it must surely be clear that the Irish nationalism that calls forth popular passion in its support is not to be appeased by the offer of local government, of provincial self-government, of state government or colonial government within the Empire, though these might be accepted as useful steps to further demands. British statesmen may have their own meaning when they speak of Home Rule; but the Irish Home Ruler when he speaks to Home Rulers in Ireland or America makes no secret that what *he* is aiming at is the creation of a new nation to take its independent place amongst the nations of the world—the only Home Rule which Fenian or Sinn Féin and many another nationalist agitator would, in Parnell's words, “take off his coat to win.”

Just before the European war broke out, a crisis had been reached in Ireland. That country appeared to be within a measurable distance of civil war. It is not in the least wonderful that the Kaiser should have indulged the hope that British domestic difficulties would prevent her playing an active part in the European imbroglio. It is far more astonishing that the British Government should have brought the country to such a pass, by ignoring the depth of feeling and passionate earnestness in the assertion of their rights, by which the Unionists of Ireland were animated. These men were claiming no more than equality of citizenship with Englishmen and Scotchmen. They refused to have their rights taken from them and they contemplated with horror their subjection to a party which they knew to be fundamentally disloyal to Kingdom and Empire. Of all Governments, a Liberal Government should be the last to require the demonstration of a population armed and drilled to convince it of the earnestness and sincerity of popular conviction.

It was only in the presence of European war that the Government made public their determination on no account

<sup>1</sup> Report of Parnell Commission, 1890.

to compel Ulster by force of arms to surrender the position of equality with Englishmen and Scotchmen secured to them by the Act of Union and that full protection of their rights by a Parliament of the United Kingdom, which, with John Bright, Irish Unionists believed to be the only authority sufficiently just and powerful to enforce equal and equitable rule in Ireland. By that time, however, much mischief had been done. Other bodies of Irishmen, whose objects were very different from those of the Ulster Volunteers, came into existence and armed and drilled, and became at a very critical moment in our history a great danger to the State. Amongst a civilised people there should be no arming and drilling of bodies of men, except under the authority of the State itself; but this, of course, involves the principle that the State itself should protect men's rights, and enforce justice. It cannot disburden itself of the duty of protection and at the same time deny to its subjects the right to protect themselves.

In the "History of the Irish Rebellion, 1916,"<sup>1</sup> the authors, in giving an accurate account of events, have aimed at exhibiting, and not at criticising, conflicting ideals in present-day Ireland. It is an episode of importance in European as well as in Irish history; and it is astonishing that the details of the rebellion have been so little considered in England. When, after a few days, the rebellion was suppressed and fighting at an end, men's thoughts became again wholly absorbed in the tremendous European struggle. To carry on that struggle with success, the Government of the day—Mr. Asquith's Coalition Government, composed of almost all the best elements of English political life irrespective of party—had to be supported through thick and thin. So thought, and thought rightly, the British people. It was no time to censure, that is, to turn out, a Government. In more normal circumstances no Ministry could have survived for a week the report of the Royal Commission presided over by Lord Hardinge. Nevertheless this report, and the excellent and impartial history already referred to, disclose on the part of our statesmen a blindness or a recklessness in

<sup>1</sup> By W. B. Wells and N. Marlowe. Mounsel & Co., 1916.



regard to facts and an incapacity to *govern*, which it would be difficult to match in British experience. If that "episode" is at an end, the harm done by the rebellion and the necessary measures taken for its immediate repression will remain with us for many a long year to come. And there will also remain with those who take the trouble to acquaint themselves with the facts the uncomfortable reflection that with only an ordinary amount of frankness and firmness on the part of British statesmen, that rebellion would never have taken place.

In the "History of the Rebellion," already quoted, the authors very clearly and shortly show how and why the independence and prosperity of the British Isles are bound up with their constituting in the face of the world a national unit; and they point out that Sir Roger Casement's conspiracy with Germany to sever Ireland's connection with Great Britain is merely a repetition of projects often before entered into by powerful enemies for her destruction. The changes in modern naval warfare have certainly not rendered it less necessary than in former times, that Ireland and Great Britain should be defended as if they were one island. If these writers are correct, Sir Roger Casement, as early as the summer of 1913, was in communication with General Bernhardt, to whom he sent a curious article which he had contributed to the *Irish Review*. The importance of Ireland to the Germans, it was observed, lay in the fact that its position gave it the command of the Atlantic and would cut off British ports from that ocean. Militarily, a single German army corps, if once landed, would suffice to overpower all resistance; but he did not advocate a "German-owned Ireland," which perhaps Europe might not like. "Germany would have to attain her end," the article continues, that is, "the permanent disabling of the maritime supremacy of Great Britain, by another and less provocative measure. An Ireland already severed by a sea held by German warships, and temporarily occupied by a German army, might well be permanently and irrevocably severed from Great Britain, and with common assent created into a neutralised, independent, European State, under international guarantees.

An independent Ireland would, of itself, be no threat or hurt to any European interest. On the contrary, to make of Ireland an Atlantic Holland, a maritime Belgium, would be an act of restoration to Europe of this, the most naturally favoured of European islands, that a Peace Congress should in the end be glad to ratify at the instance of a victorious Germany. . . . The main object of Germany would be the opening of the seas, and their permanent freeing from that overwhelming control Great Britain has exercised since the destruction of the French navy, largely based, as all naval strategists must perceive, upon the unchallenged possession of Ireland."

Strange as it may seem the Government in London and in Dublin remained blind, in spite of warning after warning, to the danger of Irish disaffection, and to the preparations that the extreme Nationalists were making for actual rebellion. Blindness is at least the most charitable excuse that can be made for their inaction. Mr. Birrell and Mr. Redmond, after the Dublin outbreak, very honourably and frankly admitted in the House of Commons that they had been mistaken as to the trend of events. "Mr. Redmond always took the view that Sinn Feiners were negligible"<sup>1</sup>; and if neither Mr. Birrell nor Mr. Dillon in this quite agreed with him, the three seem to have concluded that it was better to run almost any risk than that of taking action against them. In the early days of the war Mr. Redmond, speaking for Irish Nationalists, had boasted to the House of Commons of the confidence which might be reposed in the people of Ireland to resist every menace of German invasion. Ireland was able and willing to defend itself without British help! Let British troops be withdrawn from Ireland to places where their services were needed. As a matter of fact Ireland, of course, like Great Britain, owes her immunity from invasion not so much to local patriotism on shore, as to the strength of the great navy that flies the Union Jack—the sea power of the United Kingdom; and the special risk Ireland runs of invasion springs mainly from that hostility to the British con-

<sup>1</sup> Evidence given before the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland.

nection to which Mr. Birrell, Mr. Redmond, and Mr. Dillon seem almost wilfully to have closed their eyes. That they did so has entailed on their countrymen on both sides of the Irish Channel calamitous consequences of which we have not yet seen the end.

Since the rebellion was repressed—and it was a much more formidable one than the British public has at all realised—both the late and the present Prime Ministers have tried in vain to get the jarring sections of Irish opinion to come to some sort of working compromise on the vexed subject of Home Rule; for which attempts neither of them has received any thanks from any body of Irishmen. The Nationalist parliamentary party, presided over by Mr. Redmond, has appealed to the Irish race all over the world to help them to save Ireland from Germany! <sup>1</sup> The words of this “Appeal” are worth quoting. “We declare that the action of the British Government since the formation of the Coalition in May, 1915, culminating in the speech of the Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George) last night, has made the task of carrying on a constitutional movement in Ireland so difficult as to be almost impossible. The constitutional movement can yet be saved, but only by the active assistance of all level-headed Nationalists in Ireland, and in an especial degree by the aid of the millions of the Irish race in the great Dominions of the Crown, and in the United States of America. To these we appeal most earnestly to come to the aid of those who have rescued Ireland from being made the cat’s-paw and tool of Germany, and are struggling against terrible odds to keep open the road to Irish liberty through peaceful and constitutional means, a struggle in which we are hampered by the British Government which plays into the hands of the Irish pro-German revolutionary party with a stupid perversity worthy of the worst reactionaries of Petrograd.”

To those who knew what the real influence of American-Irish Nationalists has been during the last half century on Irish politics in this country, an appeal to them by the heirs of Mr. Parnell to stem the advance of disloyalty and disaffection, and to walk in constitutional paths is remarkable

<sup>1</sup> March 8th, 1917.

enough ! How has the appeal been answered in Irish Nationalist newspapers ?

The report of the Hardinge Commission, whilst in effect a heavy censure on the conduct of the Irish administration, ought not to make us visit on the agents of an unhappy policy all the blame that belongs to the statesmen who initiated, adopted and pursued it. It was Mr. Birrell's misfortune to be the instrument for carrying out a policy which the facts and conditions of the time doomed to certain failure. Mr. Gladstone's plunge into Home Rule in 1886 meant much more than he or his followers at the time seemed to recognise. Several times in the last thirty years have the supporters of that policy thrown their crude ideas into the form of an Act of Parliament. Out of four attempts at Home Rule legislation three altogether failed to obtain the approval of Parliament and the country ; and though one of them—the latest—got " on to the Statute Book " it got there in a way no other statute had ever got there before. It was disapproved by the House of Lords. It cannot be asserted that it had been approved by the British people, and its passage through Parliament had brought Ireland to the brink of civil war. To-day both in Great Britain and Ireland one of the few things about which men are agreed is that *that* Home Rule scheme would satisfy no one, and *could* never work ! Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1886 was rejected by the House of Commons, in which there was a large Liberal majority, and by the country at a General Election. Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill of 1893 was rejected by the House of Lords, whose action was approved by the people at the General Election of 1895. The Irish Council Bill of 1907 (it was not really a Home Rule Bill but was put forward as a step towards one), brought forward by Mr. Asquith and Mr. Birrell, no doubt after consultation with their Irish Nationalist supporters, found no public approval in any part of the United Kingdom. After being denounced in Ireland by Mr. Redmond himself as a miserable half measure that no one wanted, it disappeared without having ventured to face a second reading in the House of Commons. The fourth Home Rule measure, in a condition



of suspended animation, is "on the Statute Book," and quite lately we have been assured that the "War Cabinet" which should have enough to do in making the war a success, is about to introduce one more Home Rule Bill into a superannuated and expiring House of Commons!

Thirty-one years of persistent failure might suggest that there was something fundamentally wrong in the *policy*. Granted that "Home Rule" as a phrase might be useful in the electioneering and parliamentary game by enabling men to vote together at Westminster and in British constituencies, whilst they attached to it different meanings; still, it is the demonstrated fact that as soon as the Home Rule spirit becomes incarnate (so to speak) in the humdrum clauses of a House of Commons Bill, it at once begins to lose its virtue and its charm.

Is a fifth Home Rule Bill really required to teach once for all the indisputable truth that the spirit which animates the Home Rule movement is not a desire for better local government in Ireland, but is the ardent desire of a section of the Irish people to create an entirely separate Irish nation, as free from all connection with Great Britain as either Holland or Belgium? Mr. Chamberlain saw this clearly enough when he denounced the "Separation Bill" of 1886, and made up his mind to follow Lord Hartington against his old leader Mr. Gladstone. With Sir Charles Dilke, on the other hand, Home Rule was merely a "form of local government,"<sup>1</sup> a difference of view between the two Radical statesmen and intimate friends, illustrative perhaps of the dissimilar outlook of the man who firmly grasps political principle, and of the man who does not look beyond the details of a measure, and its party effect at the moment, to its fundamental character, and the results to which ultimately it must lead. A "form of local government" is exactly that which an Irish Home Rule Bill is *not*, if it is to satisfy Irish Home Rule aspirations. Home Rule is a difficulty; *because* the issue at stake is a national and not a local one.

At the present time the Sinn Fein party is far the strongest party of Irish Nationalists. There was no concealment of

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Sir Charles Dilke."

the object to achieve which it promoted and led the late Irish rebellion. To found an Irish republic to rule Ireland as a whole, to ally Ireland with Germany, and to establish her complete independence of the Kingdom and Empire was its avowed aim. The 20,000 rifles that arrived with Sir Roger Casement on the coast of Ireland from Germany went to the bottom of the sea, and Casement was at once arrested. The raid, contemporaneous with the rebellion, upon Yarmouth and Lowestoft by German men-of-war on Wednesday in Easter week, was a futile performance, if intended to assist the Irish rebellion by demoralising the British public, and rendering the Government unable to turn its whole attention to Ireland. In a week the rebellion was at an end—after sixty-three officers had been killed and wounded and nearly 400 men amongst the troops, forty amongst loyal volunteers and constabulary, and some 800 civilians. The authors of "The Irish Rebellion of 1916" say with truth that it appears to have been the policy of the authorities to minimise the importance of the Irish risings of Easter week. Assuredly the country was within an ace of having to deal with civil war in Ireland on no small scale in the very midst of the greatest world struggle in which it has ever been engaged; and it is best that the country should know these things.

Before any advance can be made in the direction of granting to Ireland greater independence of the United Kingdom control than is enjoyed by England and Scotland, men must make up their minds as to who is to be the ultimate sovereign of the three kingdoms. At present *Parliament*—King, Lords and Commons—is ultimate and absolute sovereign, and not more so in constitutional theory than in fact. The King's Executive, dependent on the United Parliament, governs all three. As a matter of fact the King's Ministers at Westminster governed Ireland even before the Irish Union. And for the peace and even the safety of the British islands this was necessary. We live now in a United Kingdom, and in democratic times; and personal sovereignty is at an end; but it is no more possible to divide up with safety into several portions the sovereign power

that rules the British Islands than it was in the days of King William and King James.

All previous Home Rule schemes having been discredited we are now advised in some quarters to take a new departure, to imitate the success of our colonial Empire, repeal the Irish Union, and turn Ireland into a self-governing colony or dominion within the Empire. The fact that Ireland is not New Zealand, that all the conditions that make the colonial system in the one case a success are wanting or reversed in the other, should make us pause. Thirty years ago we used to hear of Sweden and Norway, and Iceland and Denmark, as object-lessons from which to learn the merits of Gladstone's Home Rule ! Now we hear of New Zealand ! But the Fenians, Sinn Feiners, and extreme Nationalists—in short, the great majority of the Nationalist party—do not want to be a loyal dominion or commonwealth within the Empire. They do not want to be a mere State or Province ; they claim independent nationhood and would only accept a subordinate position as a stepping stone to complete separation. Surely something is to be learned from the events of the last half dozen years in Ireland—the near prospect of civil war ; the treason of Sir Roger Casement ; the German-Irish conspiracy and rebellion of the Easter week two years ago ; the terrible bloodshed and destruction they entailed, and the bitter memories they have left behind them.

The rebellion in Ireland was no abnormal occurrence. It followed in due course, when the opportunity came, in the continuous stream of the Nationalist agitation of the past forty years. It should have taken no one by surprise. But *after* this occurrence, and these experiences, it would be surprising if patriotic and practical statesmen should again propose to “settle the Irish question” by a complete renunciation of United Kingdom control. This would be once more to put things in train for a serious civil war.

With due regard to the safety of the British Isles, the authority of the supreme Government over army and navy and the defences of the realm *must* be maintained in every part of them, even should that Government out of sheer indecision and weakness of purpose cast off its responsibility

for the maintenance of their internal peace. Yet whilst what is called "dominion treatment" is impossible if regard is to be paid to the safety of the kingdom, there may still be room for the consideration of plans for such wholesale reconstruction of the British constitution as would constitute of Ireland a Province or sub-State, with other sub-States or Provinces, somewhat after the plan of the Canadian constitution. This apparently would necessitate the breaking up of Great Britain and of England into several States, each with a little Parliament and Executive Government of its own, and a supreme Parliament and Government over them all. But till a British Abbé Siéyès has thrown into some sort of form his conception of the new constitution, it would be a waste of time to consider from a practical point of view suggestions at present entirely vague and indefinite.

Whatever may be proposed, let it be repeated that when it comes to practice the fundamental question will always have to be answered—Who on great national questions is to be sovereign of and in the United Kingdom? The unhesitating answer of British statesmanship, before Mr. Gladstone's reckless plunge of 1886, was—*the people of Great Britain and Ireland*. Equal privileges and rights to Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen, with any amount of local self-government that might be found convenient; but in these democratic days, neither in theory nor in fact can there be any but one national sovereign of these islands. To tamper with this principle is to make no advance to settling the question, but will ever be to court over again the danger of civil war.

The Union between Great Britain and Ireland of 1801 was almost certain to have come sooner or later, though possibly not precisely in that form. That it came at the opening of the nineteenth century was rendered necessary by the war; though there were many considerations that had already made many statesmen desire it. But for the safety of the whole kingdom it was absolutely necessary, at a time of war with a powerful enemy who looked for assistance to Irish rebellion, that one Executive Government should rule supreme over both islands. Under the system of Grattan's



Parliament this could only be managed by irregular, and utterly unsatisfactory methods of getting Parliament and Government to work together, which it would have been criminal to revive. Pitt did the best that was open to him, in uniting the Parliaments, and it is melancholy that he was powerless to give to that policy the completion that his statesmanlike mind desired. Pitt was no absolute king. Not only in Great Britain was the intense and narrow Protestantism of King and country a very formidable obstacle, to be overcome; but in Ireland, seething with disaffection and revolution, the Prime Minister could not afford at such a time to throw into the scale against his country the indignation of the great mass of those who, however narrow-minded, were nevertheless its loyal defenders.

What will be the final judgment of history on the action in regard to Ireland of the Parliaments of the United Kingdom? Of course, if any trouble or disaster occurs in that country, from an Irish riot to a potato famine, it is put by political faction to the account of what an Irish Andrew Fairservice would call the "sad and sorrowful union." Yet when this period of nearly a century and a quarter is considered as a whole, and compared with preceding centuries, it must be admitted that Ireland has been better governed as part of the United Kingdom than it ever was before, with more regard to equal rights and justice between man and man and more desire to improve the lot of the least prosperous part of the community.

Political and party controversies are still too recent to permit of an impartial judgment being passed upon the revolution (for it is nothing less) that has been effected in the land system of Ireland by modern legislation involving the peaceful transfer of ownership from one class to another. Possibly a future generation may regard this as an achievement of statesmanship of a very high order indeed; and it is at least certain that it could never have been brought about by a supreme authority that was without the power and the credit that belongs to a Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Still those who desire to repeal the Union urge that, admitting that some good has been done under the Union system,

it has entirely failed to remove political discontent and to turn into loyal subjects large masses of Irish citizens. This is true ; though it must be remembered that the disloyalty is very much less general now than it was in the days of the French Revolution and the United Irishmen.

Amongst the leaders of the Irish Rebellion of 1916 there were no Protestants and no farmers, a striking fact when the circumstances of previous outbreaks are called to mind.<sup>1</sup> But what would have happened had the Casement rebellion met with a single week of success ? A singularly interesting description is given of the principal performers in the Dublin tragedy. Of the seven men who signed the proclamation of Easter Monday and constituted themselves the " Provisional Government of the Irish Republic," the name of only one—James Connolly—was known to the general public even in Ireland, and that chiefly for his socialist and anti-capitalist zeal. The connection with England he repudiated as buttressing in Ireland the bulwarks of capitalism, for which he desired to substitute a purely Gaelic socialist system. Pearse, the President of the Irish Republic, one of the most energetic founders of the Volunteer organisation in 1913, who in the early months of the war had rejected the authority of Mr. Redmond, was an enthusiastic Gaelic scholar. In that character he had started and run, not too successfully, an Irish-speaking school near Dublin. With him, however, Celtic literature seems not to have been cultivated wholly for its own sake, and he had indulged for years past in dreams of an Irish rebellion. " He was a man of brooding imagination with a strong introspective tendency ; and it seems that the idea that the Irish cause demanded a blood sacrifice haunted him in later years." <sup>1</sup> Mr. MacNeill, the president of the Volunteer organisation, had been an Irish barrister, who more recently had edited the Gaelic journal, become an Irish scholar of mark, and been appointed eight or nine years before Professor of Ancient Irish History in the national university. He would appear to have leant in his political views to more moderate forms of Irish Nationalism, and his conduct at the outbreak of the rebellion makes it doubtful as to how

<sup>1</sup> Wells and Marlowe.

far he wished to go at that time in the policy of violent insurrection.

In its origin, "Sinn Fein" though very anti-British in feeling and utterly dissatisfied with Redmondite Home Rule, had not declared for absolute separation, nor the founding of an Irish Republic. Even in 1915 Mr. Redmond regarded the whole thing with contempt, declaring there was nothing in "Sinn Fein" but a "temporary cohesion of isolated cranks in various parts of the country, and no one could say exactly what were their principles or objects. In fact," he continued, "they have no policy and no leaders and do not amount to a row of pins as far as the future of Ireland is concerned." Not the first dangerous conspiracy that has grown out of a despised and harmless-looking movement, in which as time went on all the moderating elements have lost influence and the organisation has come to be directed and commanded by the boldest and most violent of its adherents.

Long before Easter, 1916, the Irish Government and the British Government in Dublin and London had before them reports of the way in which things were shaping. They knew that the extremists were everywhere getting the upper hand, were largely drilled and armed, and were only awaiting a favourable opportunity to rise and proclaim their independence. The opportunity came and the consequences were, in all conscience, serious enough, but that they were not infinitely more disastrous the country owes simply to the vigilance of H.M.'s Sloop *Bluebell* and to the promptitude and fine conduct of His Majesty's troops. A Government incapable of *governing* had allowed things to get to such a pass, that it had to hand over Ireland to martial law (so-called) under the Defence of the Realm Acts, in order to save the situation, to protect the lives and property of Irishmen and to re-establish the threatened security of kingdom and Empire.

The way in which this has been done does not here concern us; but what does concern both the British and the Irish people is that they should rightly understand the real ends at which powerful political combinations are aiming. The

Easter Monday proclamation of 1916 at least makes perfectly clear "the principles and objects" for which "Sinn Fein" was working, and for which the Irish flag was hoisted. The Irish Republican Brotherhood (that is the Fenians), through their secret revolutionary organisations, the Irish Volunteers, and the Irish Citizen Army had, so says the proclamation, waited for the right moment which had now come. They were, therefore, now striking with full confidence of victory and in reliance on the Irish in America and their allies in Europe to set up a sovereign and independent Irish Republic. To this cause they devote themselves, invoking on its behalf the blessing of Heaven, and for their arms its protection.

No one need question the sincerity of those who framed this appeal. It rests on sentiment, not the less difficult to deal with because the sentiment springs from brooding imagination and dreams and seems on the whole to prefer fiction to fact. This is the Irish difficulty. It is not a question of practical grievances. It is not a question of more or less local government. The real grievance is, that Ireland forms part of the Kingdom and Empire—that is of the British nation. This indeed is a difficulty not easy to deal with. No sudden prescription will cure the mischief. But there is a course of conduct which will certainly aggravate and prolong it—viz., the concealment of, or the leaving open to doubt, the absolute refusal with which Irish projects of this nature will always be met. The Irishman shares the rights and privileges of Englishmen and Scotchmen in a united nation. Irish Nationalists will not be allowed to break it up. It is no kindness to any section of the people of Ireland to leave this in doubt.



## CHAPTER X

### THE WAR AND HOME POLITICS

SINCE the war began, the British nation within the United Kingdom and in other parts of the Empire, as we have seen, has been living under altogether abnormal conditions. The great ends for which it became evident that we were fighting—viz., security for ourselves and the freedom of Europe from military dictation, were, it was rightly believed, only to be attained by a supreme national effort—by the sacrifice of life and property to an extent unprecedented in history, and by the temporary sacrifice also of individual rights and privileges which British citizens had been accustomed to regard as the natural heritage of free men. We have not indeed formally appointed “a Dictator”—a proceeding uncongenial to British instincts; but we have for the time being surrendered to arbitrary administrative authority rights and liberties hitherto protected by fundamental provisions and customs of the Constitution. Freedom from arbitrary arrest, public trial, freedom of speech, of writing, of public meeting—liberties of the individual citizen which could only be interfered with by proceedings taken in due course of law, before the accustomed tribunals.

When peace comes, neither the British Empire nor Europe will get back precisely to the conditions that existed before the war. Let us first of all consider the United Kingdom. It is more than possible that the experiences of the last few years will have caused no inconsiderable portion of the public to have become more or less acclimatised to an arbitrary system of government, and less tolerant than heretofore of the checks and limitations hitherto imposed by law on the power of the Executive. A democratic Government—that is, a Government appointed and controlled by a majority of the people, may be as arbitrary, as intolerant of opposition, even

of criticism, as Governments resting on a narrower basis. And many quiet citizens may come to think that order is better preserved, and that the country enjoys a quieter and more peaceful life, when the Government of the day is entrusted with far greater powers than used to belong to it in the rough and tumble days of past freedom. It would be rash to assume that the Defence of the Realm Act and the regulations made under it will at once be wholly swept away in the first days of peace. It would seem that once an extreme democracy is established the old jealousy of power in high places tends to disappear, and even the strong sentiment of respect for individual liberty becomes weaker. Erskine himself would move Englishmen but little in the twentieth century by the most eloquent appeal to their veneration for *habeas corpus*, and the sacredness of trial by jury! John Stuart Mill would preach on "Liberty" to deaf ears! People don't really care much nowadays about the "Old Constitution." Whilst "the individual has withered," the State has become "more and more." The philosopher, were he still with us, might perhaps find some consolation in witnessing the immediate addition to the electorate of Great Britain of six million women, and have no dread of the prospect that this holds out of the eventual "Subjection of Men." "Liberty" in his sense of the word may soon be dismissed to join his "political economy" in Mars and Saturn, as being equally unsuited to the requirements of democratic statesmanship. Blackstone, Erskine, Mill—a dissimilar trio no doubt—are equally out of date in the twentieth century, which, like its predecessors, will have to find its way by its own lights and led by guides of its own.

War conditions are not, however, wholly accountable for the change of system and the change of feeling that are becoming apparent, though they have hastened them on. The growing dissatisfaction with our parliamentary system is not new, and if accompanied with a serious effort to improve that system, would be welcome. Unfortunately, at least in the eyes of believers in parliamentary institutions, the present tendency does not appear to be in the direction of improving the House of Commons and the House of Lords,

so as to increase the respect in which they are held by the country and therefore their usefulness ; but rather in withdrawing from Parliament much of the authority that has hitherto belonged to it. Where has this authority gone ? Will the enfranchisement of women, the establishment of universal suffrage, the abolition of the freehold qualification, and the great approach made to equal electoral districts, whilst adding enormously to the number of the electors, increase the general respect for the members elected, which has already suffered a grievous fall from their own action in voting themselves salaries ? Of the House of Lords at the present time it can only be said that *practically* the old Chamber has ceased to exist as an effective branch of the Legislature, and it has not yet been determined what, if anything, is to be put in its place. It appears probable that the present Parliament will have to prolong its existence till the war is over ; and when peace comes the country will have to make acquaintance, not only with a new House of Commons, founded on a new basis, but with a new *parliamentary system*, and with problems before the country deeper and more difficult to solve than any with which its statesmen have hitherto had to deal.

The public might well have expected that when statesmen on both sides and their followers had combined for a great purpose, and in so doing had laid aside for a time their political preferences and antipathies, great constitutional questions of lasting importance to the country would have been allowed to rest till that purpose was accomplished, and till they could be considered with the attention they deserved. Our leading statesmen's thoughts have been for four years and are still fully occupied with the exigencies of the immediate present. Peers and M.P.'s, electors and newspapers, give their whole attention to the war and how it can be carried on. No public meeting is ever held except for the discussion of some subject directly connected with the war, and to pass great measures which must deeply affect the welfare of the people for generations to come, without full and genuine parliamentary and public discussion, has not been our habit in the past. But this is what is happening to-day.

It is hardly too much to say that the House of Commons elected in 1910 has outlived its moral authority altogether, as the representative of the people, except so far as concerns the maintenance and support of a Government which it believes can successfully carry on the war and bring about a satisfactory peace. The House of Lords, containing a large proportion of the statesmanship of the day, has lost its power, either as an effective critic of the Government, or as a branch of the Legislature. In truth we have now no House of Lords. Yet this mere Rump of a Parliament is to put the whole Constitution into the melting pot ! A few years ago we heard perhaps more than enough about " mandates " from the people to the House of Commons, views which hardly left to the representative chamber any freedom of action. Here, however, there is neither mandate nor representation. Who ordered the House of Commons to add six million women to the electorate ? Who ordered a redistribution of electoral power which not only breaks the connection between almost every constituency and an historic past, but is founded on principles quite novel in kind from those which have hitherto weighed with statesmen in endeavouring to secure a truly representative chamber ? There is no evidence that in the past the electorate wished these things to be done, and it is quite certain that in the present crisis of the country's fate it has not been thinking about them at all. The notion that representation should be sought for communities, classes, interests—that in the chamber of national debate variety of opinion and of political leaning is eminently desirable—seems to have been abandoned in a blind worship of mere numbers—men, women, and children.<sup>1</sup> Neither the Ministry, nor indeed any individual statesman, can be held specially responsible for the new Reform Act. Lord Curzon, a Cabinet Minister and Leader of the House of Lords, and the Lord Chancellor, both declared their opposition to one of its most important provisions. It has been framed in such a way as to convenience a superannuated House of Commons which has lost touch with the country. " One man, one vote," " One man, one value," modern expressions for the

<sup>1</sup> In some cases even minors are to be enfranchised.



older "Universal Suffrage and Equal Electoral Districts," with women's franchise thrown in, are the "true democratic principles" on which the new reform is framed. The whole thing is an arrangement, a House of Commons "compact," which, whilst the thoughts of the nation are elsewhere, for the moment suits the two front benches, and for which, therefore, the party whips combine, putting an end virtually to any genuine criticism or public debate. This may be convenient for the moment within the House of Commons, but how about the interests of the country? Will these changes in the electorate and in redistribution prove to have increased national respect for, and therefore the weight of, the Parliament of the future?

Again, it is doubtless the wish of the House of Commons at the present time to be relieved from the constant and daily worry of the Irish difficulty. Responsible statesmen being otherwise occupied, the Government refer the construction of a new constitution for Ireland to a convention of Irishmen sitting in Dublin, representatives of Great Britain—once called the predominant partner—being excluded in the hope that it may produce "a compromise" equally acceptable to Unionists and Home Rulers in Ireland. Let them debate and discuss in secret. Any conclusion to which it may come is apparently to be accepted by Great Britain, and by the instrumentality, it is presumed, of parliamentary compact, to find its "place on the Statute Book," neither the British electorate nor the British Parliament having truly accepted it; whilst at the same time the largest and most powerful body of Irish Home Rulers, the Sinn Feiners, taking no part in the proceedings, repudiate the Convention altogether!

Where is this policy of helplessness and hopelessness on the part of British statesmanship to end? For the moment, rebellion and civil war are only prevented by the presence of a large body of British troops, who would find worthier employment elsewhere, but whose presence in Ireland the Government believe to be absolutely necessary for the safety of the Kingdom. And when we look beyond the present moment to the immediate future what do we see? On "the Statute Book" there still stands an impossible Home Rule

Bill in which no one in Ireland believes as a settlement of Irish difficulties. A sweeping measure of reform accepted for Great Britain, and an Irish measure founded, so far as redistribution is concerned, on a different principle, add to the confusion of the future political relations between the two islands. Irishmen are less taxed, more prosperous, less harried by regulations under the Defence of the Realm Acts than Englishmen and Scotchmen. They are not liable to conscription. Wages are high, food is abundant, railway fares have only lately been increased, whilst hundreds of thousands of their young men are preparing to assist a foreign invasion! Is it to be believed that Ireland is to continue to be represented at Westminster in a far higher proportion than is allowed to the British electorate? "One man, one vote," and "One vote, one value," are, it seems, principles which are not to apply as regards Irish representation in the House of Commons at Westminster.

There is one principle—it is well worth harping on—by steadfast adherence to which the Irish difficulty may be reduced to a minimum; and it is moreover one which will ultimately prevail, however little for a time it may suit the exigencies of competing parties and politicians—the principle, to which reference has already been made, of political equality of citizenship between Englishmen, Scotchmen and Irishmen. It is not, of course, necessary or desirable that precisely the same laws should prevail in each of the three kingdoms; but these differences, experience has shown, are quite compatible with the absolute equality of British citizens in relation to the supreme authority which governs the United Kingdom. In former days, the efforts of Whigs, of Reformers, of Liberals of all kinds were successful in removing the inequalities, injustices and unfair privileges of which Irishmen rightly complained. The cry for Repeal—Home Rule—Secession—raises very different considerations, as Macaulay in a famous peroration pointed out to O'Connell in the House of Commons, when Lord Grey and those who had supported Catholic Emancipation for years in many an uphill fight united in defence of the Union. "The loudest clamour that the honourable and learned gentlemen can raise against Lord

Grey will be trifling when compared with the clamour which Lord Grey withstood in order to place the honourable and learned gentleman where he now sits . . . I tell him that the same spirit which sustained us in a just contest for him will sustain us in an equally just contest against him. Calumny, abuse, royal displeasure, popular fury, exclusion from office, exclusion from Parliament, we were ready to endure them all rather than he should be less than a British subject. We never will suffer him to be more."

Mr. Gladstone's new departure in 1886 was to have lasting consequences for his party, for himself, and for those who would follow in his footsteps. The fatal policy which he inaugurated has ever since hung like a millstone round the necks of Liberal statesmen, and has been associated with persistent failure. This has been so, not from any want of skill and ingenuity on the part of those who framed so-called Home Rule Bills, but from the impossibility in modern conditions of establishing a working constitution based on the principle of different political nationhoods within the British Isles. In truth, Home Rule in the Nationalist sense is a thoroughly *retrograde* policy in conflict with the steady tendencies of our time, and its advocates have to prevail not merely over antagonistic political theory, but also to contend against modern facts. Facilities of locomotion and communication, the mingling of interests of all kinds amongst British and Irish, and the diminution, even in Ireland, of religious hatred, all tend in the direction of uniting ultimately, though not at once, in a larger national spirit, the provincial prejudices kept alive by Sinn Fein poets, by honest, if ignorant sentimentalists, by bitter haters of Great Britain, founded for the most part upon a largely imaginary history of the past, and by the supposed exigencies of the "party game" on both sides of the Irish Channel.

The Irish Rebellion of 1916, the language of the Sinn Fein leaders at that time and since, the Sinn Fein Convention at Dublin, have opened, it is to be hoped, the eyes of Englishmen more fully to the real nature of Nationalist demands. What they demand is Irish *Secession* from the Kingdom and Empire; and they are determined to obtain it

by force as soon as opportunity offers, with the assistance of an invading army of our foreign foes. This is not merely an "Irish question." The duty of the Government of the United Kingdom is to put down secession as an attack on the life of the nation, which they exist to guard.

Whatever might be the outcome of the Convention of Irishmen presided over by Sir Horace Plunkett, who, without having received the gratitude he deserves, has laboured for a great part of his life to get Irishmen to pull together, it was certain that a new constitution would not be reached by general consent of the Irish people. Sinn Fein—the majority and most zealous of the Nationalists—ostentatiously repudiated the Convention altogether, as their principles no doubt compelled them to do. And there has yet appeared no suggestion by which (outside Sinn Fein) the profound differences that divide Irish parties can be removed. By the Convention itself it seemed possible some formula might be found, or some resolutions passed, in which its members might concur. Such a result might prove important on one side or the other of the old controversy, which was certain to revive ; but it was too much to expect that the Irish people themselves, differing profoundly on fundamentals, could by any mere form of words be brought into effective co-operation in fashioning a new constitution. They are working for different and opposite ends. Neither in Great Britain nor in Ireland is anything to be gained in the long run by ignoring facts and shutting our eyes to the truth. As regards Ireland, therefore, no good whatever has been done or could be done by the Convention, and the future constitution of that country and of the United Kingdom has not been extracted from the melting pot.

If the constitutional future of Ireland and her future relation to Great Britain are obscure, is the political future of Great Britain herself and of the British Empire much more clearly defined ? To tell the truth, no small part of the British Constitution appears for the time being to be in a state of solution, and British subjects feel not a little in the dark as to how they are about to be governed. King and Cabinet, House of Lords, House of Commons—these



institutions they thought they understood. The King, of course, as supreme head of the Executive, acts in this country on the advice of responsible Ministers, that is of the Cabinet. Their responsibility is several and joint ; and the only way in which the public can judge of policy and the reasons for it is through the speeches of Cabinet Ministers. Reference has already been made to the new system inaugurated by Mr. Lloyd George. Has that system or anything the least like it come to stay ? Of course the change was made to meet transient difficulties ; and the new system, if it is one and not a mere makeshift, is in its infancy. Still there seems to be underlying it a kind of idea that may develop—the idea of a Prime Minister who is himself solely responsible for the Ministry, assisted by colleagues for the most part not in his Cabinet, many of whom are in their own lines experts, rather than qualified to be joint counsellors with him of the King in those multifarious affairs and difficult questions of high politics in which the guidance of a council of experienced statesmen is required.

If there is amongst us some haziness as to the nature of the Cabinet of the future and its place in the working of the constitutional system, the obscurity is far denser which veils the future of the House of Lords. A “ Speaker’s Committee,” sitting in private, has framed for the House of Commons the most revolutionary Reform Bill ever presented to the British people. It is passed “ by compact.” Reform of the House of Lords is, it seems, as much beyond effective parliamentary cognisance as reform of the House of Commons. So it is referred to Lord Bryce’s Committee, sitting in private. Are its conclusions, like those of the Speaker’s Committee, without adequate parliamentary or public debate, to be turned into statute by the new machinery of the “ compact ” ?

It is of course undeniable that in the actual work of preparing and passing laws Parliament for the time being has largely abdicated in favour of bodies controlled by the Executive Government. “ Regulations ” are taking the place of “ laws.” “ Emergency statutes ” have been a necessity of the time ; and the emergency will come to an end. But all that stands on quite a different footing from

the passing of great constitutional measures, which will have a lasting effect on the future of the kingdom, under the authority of a worn-out Parliament, become incapable of performing its proper parliamentary functions, without mandate, and without any genuine parliamentary or public debate.

Even as regards finance, the exclusive control of which has hitherto always been jealously guarded by the House of Commons, very little respect is in these days paid to that assembly. A newspaper intimation that the pay of the army is to be increased by fifty millions a year, or that a subsidy of forty-five millions is needed to lower the price of bread below the market rate, takes the place of a statement made by a responsible Minister to the representatives of the people explaining all the circumstances, asking for their approval, and indicating the means by which increased expenditure will be met. As regards many departments of administration, Ministers have again and again held the language of autocrats as if the British people had no concern in their own government beyond that of giving unquestioned obedience to the undiscussed decrees of a statesmanship which their own painful experience teaches them is by no means all-wise. Never before in the whole course of English history has such unquestioned authority and such unlimited power been granted to British Ministers to take such action as to them seemed desirable or necessary. Practically they have been free to spend what they liked, as well as to command the services of the whole manhood of Great Britain. The mere costliness of a policy either in money or in men, in past days a heavy check on military and naval enterprise, has never restrained them. The national effort has been on an unexampled scale ; assuredly nothing less would have sufficed to save the world from German domination. But how far will history pronounce that these efforts have always been guided by the highest statesmanship, or that they would not have met with more success had ampler discussion and examination been permitted ?

When peace at last comes and the nation proceeds to take stock of its position, to examine in calm mood the recent

management of its affairs, and to arrange its future, a totally different atmosphere will prevail, and things will be looked at from another point of view. The problems to be solved will be many and difficult. A new electorate, a new kind of House of Commons, a new kind of House of Lords, and a new sort of Cabinet will have to deal with them as best they can. The meeting of the first peace Parliament and the introduction of the first peace Budget may possibly open up prospects of a very novel kind to the British people. For the last few years national economy, in men's eyes, has been unpatriotic. National extravagance has been rampant. But with peace a change at last inevitably comes.

*"Then was the time for borrowing,  
But now it's time to pay;  
A Budget is a serious thing,  
Oh take the sword away."*

A gigantic national debt will probably amount to five or six thousand millions and an enormous pension charge, whilst in no direction do we see a prospect of reducing ordinary peace expenditure below the ante-war rates! Is there any way in which new sources of revenue can be tapped? "Taxing the foreigner"—highly recommended a few years ago in the form of import duties to lighten the burden on our own shoulders—never seemed a very promising prescription to those who remembered that the "foreigner" in question was a customer dealing with ourselves, and that the duty would evidently enter into the deal. But with peace will come the necessity of reviving trade and commerce all round as quickly as possible, and even Protectionist enthusiasts will hardly recommend for that purpose a world-wide system of high tariffs!

It seems to be imagined that the old controversies that divided political parties in the past have been permanently closed. Home Rulers and Unionists, Free Traders and Protectionists, have been working together in Parliament and in the constituencies in a great common cause in support of which the whole Empire and nation—outside the south and west of Ireland—was passionately at one. But the danger over, and victory won, shall we be any nearer agreement

on those great domestic controversies? The peace of Ireland and the relations of Great Britain and Ireland to each other will certainly continue to be subjects of anxiety and to demand the exercise by our statesmen of political wisdom and firmness. Is the general public more likely to see eye to eye on this subject in the future than in the past?

So with the economic controversy. It is suspended, rightly suspended, but hardly closed. No doubt Free Trade principles, like national economy, reduction of debt, and domestic reform, thrive best in an atmosphere of peace. During the present tremendous world-war circumstances did not permit either Protectionist or Free Trader to take the field. Who would advocate to-day an import duty on food? Who, when peace comes, will be in a hurry to impose a duty on raw materials and commodities employed in our trade and manufactures? Yet of such things do the imports of the United Kingdom mainly consist. Had a high tariff existed in 1914, the events of August and September would have swept it away, as much worse than useless.

With an assured peace once established, with enormous financial burdens on the shoulders of the country, with the necessity of raising a gigantic annual revenue, it is to be hoped that Free Traders and Protectionists will approach the difficult problems before them with open minds. Economic advantage is not the only matter to be considered; and it may perhaps be shown that national security calls for restrictions and limitations in certain directions on the freedom of commerce. It seems, however, vain to expect that party controversy will not again rage round financial and commercial policy. Questions of direct and indirect taxation, of tariffs affecting this and that class or interest, of bounties granted to this or that industry—these are likely to absorb more than ever the attention of the political world in the near future. What will the new electorate, which will consist very largely of State employees and State pensioners, have to say about them?

It is at any rate certain that one of the first subjects to which the new House of Commons and the new electorate,



including the six million of women voters, must give serious attention, will be the financial policy which the Government is to pursue. The National Debt before the war stood at some six hundred and fifty millions, having been gradually reduced from nine hundred millions in 1816, the highest point it ever reached. The interest on the debt, moreover, four years ago was only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Had the year 1917 seen the re-establishment of peace, the National Debt would have increased by no less than three thousand millions, on which gigantic sum the nation pays interest at 5 per cent. There is, moreover, no sign whatever that the normal annual expenditure after the war will be less than it was before it. The war is not over, the end is not even in sight, and war expenditure steadily increases. Even, however, supposing annual war expenditure remains at the present rate (1917), we are told on the highest authority that for every year the war continues a sum of £1,500,000,000 will be added to the National Debt. If interest be taken at 5 per cent., and allowance made of 1 per cent. for Sinking Fund, the gross addition to *the annual debt charge* each year of war would be about £120,000,000, and the net addition, after deducting payments due from Allies and Dominions, would be £90,000,000.<sup>1</sup>

These are appalling figures as they stand, and with every month that the war lasts they become worse. Our statesmen are unable to indicate any hope of a brightening prospect, and offer us nothing but the unsatisfactory consolation that other nations, especially the enemy, will be in greater financial distress than ourselves. It is exceedingly probable that the new House of Commons and the new electorate will consider, after the conclusion of peace, that some greater effort to diminish the burden of debt than that of annual payment of interest and Sinking Fund is required. A private individual, if heavily in debt, is often compelled to do more than pay interest upon it, more even than reduce his ordinary expenditure. He finds it necessary to put his hand on his capital, to realise a portion of his possessions, and so by a

<sup>1</sup> See First Report of Select Committee of House of Commons on National Expenditure, 1917.

great effort made for once throw off for ever a large portion of his burden. He has perforce to take steps to protect his solvency. He may perhaps be able to increase his income. Otherwise he must reduce outlay, that is he must do without things. He may be compelled to realise some portion of his wealth by sale in order to pay off part of the principal of the debt.

It is more than likely that the financial position which will face the new Parliament will convince it of the necessity of having recourse to quite novel expedients to meet the emergency. One thing is certain. Somehow we shall pay our debts, and keep our normal expenditure below our regular income. Or rather it may be truer to say (since with the present generation national economy has no friends) that we shall keep our income—that is the revenue—above our normal expenditure. It is by no means surprising therefore, that some should see in what they call the “conscription of wealth” a means by which the nation by a great effort may throw off a part of that dead weight of debt which cannot but depress the commercial and industrial energies of the people. The “conscription of wealth” is in itself an absurd expression, suggesting the existence of an analogy in principle between the compulsory provision of man-power for the army and of money to meet the expenses of the war. Conscription of men is new. The volunteer exists no longer. But there has never been anything voluntary in the payment of taxes, and wealth has always been “conscripted.” If something approaching to half a man’s income is taken from him for the purposes of the State, it is absurd to tell him that his wealth goes scot-free. So far as wealth profitably employed is concerned, capital and income are different aspects of the same wealth, and if you tax the one you tax the other. It doesn’t matter to the holder of £1,000 war stock whether you call 25 per cent. deduction from his interest a tax on his income or his capital. There is no constitutional limit to this “conscription.” If 100 per cent. were deducted from the interest the whole of the capital would, of course, be gone.

The death duties afford an instance of the direct taxation,

or conscription if that word is preferred, of capital. They by no means afford a model method of taxation. They are uncertain in amount, being dependent on arbitrary valuation. They are uncertain as to the time of their incidence. On one property they fall with much greater severity than on another. And it is probable that an equal revenue would have been obtained more equitably and with less inconvenience to the taxpayer by an annual charge on his income. But, whether or not it is wise taxation, it is at all events a precedent for taxing wealth, even when not profitably employed and not the source of income. Indeed, for this no precedent is required, all private property and all classes of the community being subject to the demands of the State to satisfy the debts which the nation has incurred. The sovereign asks for a subsidy. The House of Commons grants it and determines the method by which the money shall be obtained—income tax, death duties, poll tax, customs, excise, licences, stamps, or what not—no resident within the United Kingdom, or species of property, is exempted from its burden.

Heavy taxation must of necessity be imposed for a very long time to come to meet the claims of the national creditors and of annual expenditure. That the taxation deprives the taxpayer of a large part of his property does not justify an outcry of "confiscation." The State is bound to take from the property of its subjects enough to enable the State to pay its way, whether the amount be large or small. Then arise the practical questions as to how this can best be done equitably as between individuals and classes, and so as to be least burdensome to taxpayers, at the same time regard being paid to economy in the means adopted for transferring private wealth into the public treasury. These practical considerations will be of enormous importance in the discussions in the new House of Commons and in the country, if rational debate is not obscured by silly outcries on one side and the other of "confiscation" and the "conscription of wealth," the last phrase seeming to imply that at present poor men only are conscripted for the army, and that wealth is not conscripted at all!

Now there are two golden doctrines of economics that should never be forgotten. It is unwise "to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs"; it is difficult "to take the breeks off a Hielandman." High taxes may kill business, or they may cause to the State more worry and expenditure than are covered by the revenue collected. The estimation in which different taxes have been held at different times has varied immensely, according to circumstances, to the proclivities of statesmen, the disposition of the House of Commons, and above all to the nature of the electorate on which it rests. The history of the income tax is curious. When in 1842 Sir Robert Peel revived and imposed it, the Whig Opposition declared it was no peace tax. In their view "War and income tax were wedded together." In 1874 it was only 2*d.* in the pound, and had the General Election of that year supported Mr. Gladstone, it would have been abolished altogether. Since then it has grown rapidly in favour as well as in amount, and become the mainstay of modern budgets either in war or peace. Accompanied with the practice of "taxation at the source," Sir William Harcourt regarded it with positive enthusiasm, as he saw the streams of gold flowing into the Treasury, without, in a multitude of cases, so said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the taxpayer into whose pockets the money had never been, feeling that he was taxed at all!

Though, however, there is no natural or constitutional exemption from taxation of such wealth as is not producing income, there are the very greatest practical difficulties in the way of the State's finding in that direction a fruitful source of revenue. In these matters economical considerations are not the only ones that weigh with a democratic electorate. Feelings, and sentiments also count; and the poor man whose drink, and tobacco, and sugar, and tea, are heavily taxed, and who can only just manage to support himself and his family, may easily conceive that his wealthier neighbours, surrounded to all appearance with every sort of luxury, are not doing their bit. When a man of property dies, his property of every kind is valued, and a considerable fraction of it absorbed by the State. It is then thought



right that the landlord, the farmer, the factory owner, the merchant, the business man of every kind should be mulcted of a fixed proportion of his wealth, regardless of the question whether the investment is a paying or a losing one. Some of it may not be in the nature of an investment at all. The wealth may consist of luxuries—large houses, jewellery and plate, libraries, pictures and furniture, horses and carriages and motors, and so on. All are valued and all contribute. The question will certainly be asked, whether such taxation should be confined to the occasion of death ; whether in case of a great national emergency such wealth might not be called upon ; whether such a general levy might not be made at stated intervals for the whole country. Even such a great authority as Ricardo, appalled like others in his day by the national debt accumulated during the French war, appears to have been favourable to its reduction by a general contribution from the capital of the country. The enormous difficulty and expense of valuing the whole of the private property of the nation, and the army of employees that would be required, are considerations to be weighed on the other side, and there are besides other reasons for thinking that an annual tax on profits, though a very high one, is to be preferred, from the point of view of both State and taxpayer, to a direct levy on capital. Perhaps the latter appeals most to the socialistic ideas now prevalent, especially in all probability amongst the new electorate ; and it is only rational to expect that methods of revenue-raising may develop in future Parliaments on very novel lines.

The effect of the war has been for the time largely to remove the spirit of partisanship from political action. But it would seem that all the conditions exist out of which when peace returns, party will again grow and thrive. Party lines may be differently drawn. Politicians may be divided into a greater number of parties or groups, not in itself a very desirable state of things. Assuredly it is vain to suppose that party spirit has been exorcised from the ordinary life of British politics ; and were it so, it is greatly to be doubted whether the country would be the gainer. It is the unreality—the artificiality—the machinery of modern politics, not

that real division between the opinions and tendencies of men, and their feeling for or against this, that or the other statesman, that tend to degrade public life and to make the name of politician a bye-word. It is not the party system itself, but the abuse of it, especially in recent times, and the concomitant diminished sense of individual responsibility on the part of statesmen and Members of Parliament, and candidates, that have tended to lower in the public eye the standard of political life.

As a matter of fact this spirit of partisanship is very deeply ingrained in all classes in political life, and if its excess is to be deprecated leading politicians should set the country a better example. Even in the House of Lords, whose members have no need to dread electoral machinery and caucus, the peers seem to be nowadays almost as obedient on great occasions to the party whip as are the M.P.'s in another place. A story is told, curiously illustrative of party conscience, of the behaviour of three statesmen of light and leading in reference to an important division in the House of Lords in 1871, when it was proposed to censure the Government of Mr. Gladstone for the high-handed employment of the Royal Prerogative by the Ministry in connection with the abolition of purchase in the army. Lord Lyons, our ambassa<sup>da</sup>or in Paris, disapproving the conduct of the Government, wished by remaining at his post to be absent from the division lobby ; but this did not at all suit the views of Lord Granville, his chief at the Foreign Office and leader of the House of Lords, or of the Prime Minister. Lord Lyons' reply to Lord Granville's request for his attendance and his vote is convincing. He urged that he was not a party placeman and did not owe his position to Lord Granville's political friends ; and that he disagreed with the conduct of the Government which was to be debated in the House of Lords. But what a party whip wants is a vote. He cares not for the reasons of the voter or for his personal sense of duty. Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville were at the back of the party whip, and forced the ambassador to vote against his conscience ! Pressure of a similar kind on the humblest voter at a contested election would be considered

discreditable to those who exerted it ; and it is surprising that Lord Lyons should not have declined point blank to obey the summons of the party whip.<sup>1</sup> He was a peer, and he owed it both to himself and the House of Lords to give an honest vote.

During last century great thinkers amongst Liberals—Mill, Bagshot, Fawcett and others—disliked the extension of Government control over the activities of individual citizens. Englishmen could regulate their own lives and businesses better both for themselves and the nation than the State could do it for them. In any struggle of national self-government against autocratic powers they would, of course, have been ardently for the first, without, however, finding the implicit confidence of modern Liberals that arbitrary and ubiquitous authority might be safely intrusted to the departments and officials even of a democratic State. It has recently been shown in a singularly interesting and thoughtful work<sup>2</sup> how the success of popular government as a substitute for autocracy is likely to depend on a spirit of unity amongst the people and their practical training in affairs. In our country we have been more fortunate in these respects than have some other nations. Even after a German defeat will the “whole world be safe for,” that is, fit for, “democracy”?

Even here, where we do understand self-government, there will be great difficulties to be faced ; and ministers and committees are wisely occupied with “problems of reconstruction.” Undoubtedly a good many useful lessons have been learned in the late troubled years ; whilst on the other hand some things have been done and attempted, which should not be made precedents, and which it will be as well, though not too easy, to forget.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Newton's “Life of Lord Lyons.”

<sup>2</sup> Professor Ramsey Muir's “National Self-Government.” Constable & Co., 1918.

## CHAPTER XI

### TOWARDS PEACE

THE tremendous war, which has shaken the nations during the last four years cannot, however it may end, leave the British Empire, or Europe, or the world, unchanged. It will be many years before it becomes possible to sum up its results, and strike the balance between good and evil. But it may perhaps be useful to call attention to certain facts which the progress of the struggle seems to have established, and to mark what appear to be the tendencies of public opinion which it has favoured.

Of the war itself, of the political and military strategy of the British Empire, especially, history will have much to say ; but as yet the facts in detail are not sufficiently known to the public to make criticism useful. It is natural and easy to condemn failure, and to praise success ; but to award blame or praise with justice, to decide whether those who planned or those who were to execute those plans were principally responsible for the consequences, bad or good, is a very different matter. Were Lord Chatham and Sir Richard Strachan of the famous epigram, or Lord Castlereagh, the Minister for War, most to blame for the disasters of Walcheren ? History has hardly yet made up its mind, whether the conception or execution of that unhappy project ; whether the statesmen or the commanders were chiefly responsible for the failure ; and recrimination amongst the former Cabinet Ministers though in the good old fashion it was carried to the full length of a duel on Putney Heath—brought little light into the controversy.<sup>1</sup>

Now the very essence of the mighty controversy of the nations consists, so far as Western Europe is concerned, in establishing once for all against German menace the inde-

<sup>1</sup> " George Canning and his Times," J. A. Marriott.



pendence and safety of France and Belgium, and the redressing, with respect to racial consideration, of the frontiers of Italy and Austria. In Eastern Europe the gist of the matter is the racial rivalry between Teuton and Slav. There are many subsidiary questions involved, some of greater, some of less, importance, which will require consideration by the Powers—the future of Turkey in Europe and Asia ; the future of the German Empire beyond the seas, wrested in the war from the Kaiser ; and so on, all questions the discussion of which can hardly be entered on till the condition of the combatants at the expiration of active war is ascertained. The object of the Allies will be to bring about a stable *peace* ; and the conferring Powers will very soon discover that they cannot treat the map of Europe as if it were a blank sheet, set up this State and demolish that one, and apply some sweeping “ racial or democratic principle ” to regions where the trouble arises from the inextricable mixture of races, and the hostility, racial, religious, or otherwise, of powerful sections of the population to each other. It is by no means clear that peace between the great Powers will mean permanent *tranquillity* amongst the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula ; but it is quite certain that Russia will for a time at least count far less than heretofore in shaping the progress of events in that part of the world. Speaking broadly, it may be said that the Central Powers of Europe—Germany and Austria—will survive Armageddon as the principal influence in the eastern portion of the Continent. The Western nations ought to, and, no doubt, will, do their best to secure the independence and security of the smaller States there and elsewhere ; but they are not called upon permanently to take the place of Russia in the Slav *versus* Teuton struggle in which they have never been primarily interested.

The world-war has revealed two things which were previously insufficiently realised by ourselves and Europe. The astounding power of the German race in conflict with almost the whole of the rest of the world ; and the military strength of the British Empire. These, with the influence that the United States of America will henceforth wield in European

politics, are the outstanding facts with which the statesmen of the future will have to deal. To suppose that permanent arrangements can be made for the settling of Europe which ignore the Teutonic elements of the Continent is mere dreaming ; whilst to attempt to prescribe for Germany how Germans are to be governed is the very depth of folly. It is constantly urged in this country, though rarely by responsible statesmen, that the Allies are to *impose terms* on their defeated foes, and must avoid anything like negotiation in order to bring hostilities to an end. There would seem, however, to be only two ways in which war can ever be brought to an end. The one is by absolute and complete conquest, where one party to the struggle having no enforceable rights left has virtually ceased to exist ; as was the case at the end of the civil war in America. The other is by negotiation and agreements between Governments having authority to speak for their several nations ; and it has never been found in practice that victors have been prevented in this way from exacting everything to which victory has entitled and empowered them. The absence of any *de facto* government to negotiate with may, indeed, easily create a difficulty for the victor in obtaining the peace which he desires, and any attempts on his part to set up a domestic government for his defeated foe would be almost certain, sooner or later, to prove unsuccessful.

The military strength of the British Empire has been a great revelation to the European nations, and most of all to Imperial Germany. The militarist mind was blind to national power that did not find a place in the returns of the soldiers, actually serving with the colours. British power at sea was indeed everywhere largely taken for granted ; though the completeness and rapidity with which naval predominance was established surprised the world, whilst it reflected immense credit on the British Government in maintaining after so many years of peace, at such a high pitch the readiness for immediate war and the perfect efficiency of the Fleet. But the world knew as well as we did that our military means on land were limited ; and that even if our expeditionary force of six divisions should prove a reality, and

our reserves and territorials and yeomanry were worth anything at all, which many home critics were continually asserting that they were not, the whole was a trifle in the balance, when weighed against the millions of trained soldiers that each of the great Continental powers could put into the field. And yet it was to be by the much-needed help of British troops, composed for the most part of volunteers from the ordinary civilian life of the nation, and from every class, that the great armies of France and Italy were to be saved from destruction, and their country freed from the German invader.

In October, 1917, the men employed in the navy numbered 400,000, whilst the British Army has on its rolls over 4,000,000 men. The effort made by the nations of the Empire from the beginning of the war to "provide men for the armed forces of the Crown" amounts to seven and a half millions. Of these England contributed over 60 per cent., Scotland over 8, Wales over 3, and Ireland a little over 2 per cent., whilst the Colonies and Dominions have contributed together 900,000, or 12 per cent. Another million of coloured troops, labour corps, carriers, etc., represent the splendid contribution made by India and our African and other dependencies.<sup>1</sup>

It has rarely happened in the past that a long war has been followed by precisely such a peace as the successful combatants on either side had promised themselves at the commencement of hostilities. As the years pass surrounding conditions are continually changing. And when the contention of armies ceases the statesmen of the day will find themselves face to face with a Europe in which the relative values and forces of "Nations," of "Nationalities," and of "Races" have altered not a little. Our own supreme interest, as always, is in the security of the British Empire and the future peace of a world free from the domination of aggressive militarism. The late Prime Minister in the House of Commons in 1914, and in a subsequent speech at the Guildhall, laid down in firm and moderate language the principal lines which a just pacification should follow. And every responsible British statesman has since echoed his words. Mr. Asquith always "keeps a calm sough," as his constituents might say, a

<sup>1</sup> Speech of Sir A. Geddes in the House of Commons, January 14, 1918

characteristic valued perhaps more highly in the north, than in regions further south where, when events become critical and exciting, platform drum-beating and newspaper screaming are for the moment more to the popular taste. Belgium to have her independence restored to her, with compensation for her wrongs (and at the best a poor compensation it will be for injuries such as the world has rarely witnessed). France to have Alsace-Lorraine restored to the nation from which those provinces were torn. The frontiers of Italy to be redrawn so as to include within her borders Italians who crave emancipation from Austrian rule. As regards these, nothing has happened to modify the claims of the Allies, nor (what is almost as important) to throw doubt on their power of enforcing them. For the East, it is foolish to shut our eyes to the fact that events in Russia *may* greatly limit the prospects of what *can* be effected. The creation of a really independent Polish State, always a little vague from the uncertainty of what is meant by "Poland," becomes more difficult than ever, if the withdrawal of Russian influence is to leave the field clear in that part of Europe to the action of Germany and Austria. Again, what is to happen with regard to Hungary, or Turkey in Europe, Constantinople, the Bosphorous, and the Dardanelles? These and many other scarcely less important questions can be propounded. They are difficult to answer. But whilst Russia is in a state of revolution, and whilst it is impossible to foresee what Government will follow the Revolution, and what its policy will be, the less the Allies bind themselves prematurely to specific promises for settling the affairs of Eastern Europe the better. That settlement will succeed or will fail, according as it has regard to *facts*; however well intentioned may be the objects of those whose preconceived ideas and grand principles make them ever ready with their prescriptions.

A similar comment may be made on the action of statesmen who would hurry forward their schemes for overhauling the commercial relations of the world, long before it is possible to understand and appreciate the conditions in which peace will find the trading and commercial peoples of both hemispheres. Our Government very wisely has given some atten-



tion, or at least started inquiries, as to how the immediate necessities of the people should be met, when peace is resumed and normal conditions again prevail ; when the men of our armies return again to civil employment, when women for the most part return to home life and domestic duties where they will be of most use, and the country ceases to be primarily engaged in the manufacture of munitions of war and the supply of the gigantic needs of the mighty hosts maintained in the field by ourselves and our Allies.

Certainly the suggestions of the " Economic Conference of the Allies " at Paris in the summer of 1916 hardly encourage the belief that the commercial future had then been seriously considered from the trading and industrial and financial point of view of the nations concerned. The conference was, of course, essentially a " war conference," held with the very proper object of showing to the Allies the community of their own commercial interests, and for removing any suspicion that individual members of the Alliance were seeking by the war to gain over others of them commercial or trading advantages. In peace as in war, that Germany was always the " enemy " seemed to be the grand principle of the Paris " economics," not, of course, a basis upon which in the future the peaceful relations or the commercial prosperity of nations could be securely built. Still the conference was rather throwing out suggestions than proposing definite plans, and some of our advisers at home went much further and were far more specific in their recommendations, advising for the nation the adoption of a tariff against imports varying in the case of each country in accordance with that country's attitude towards ourselves in the Great War. All the northern nations for instance, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland, as well as Spain and Switzerland, because they had been neutrals and not allies, would have to pay a very much higher duty than those who had been our friends, though small indeed when compared with that imposed on Turkey, Austria and Germany. It is fortunate that the United States can now be removed from the modified black list and take her place amongst the most favoured nations with whom we deal ! Of course, when peace, especially if it

is believed to be a stable peace, returns, all these matters will receive consideration from the point of the commercial, industrial, and financial interests of the nations concerned. These have been temporarily lost sight of in the heats and excitement of war, out of a natural desire to punish the enemy, and in forgetfulness that the punishment will fall in part upon ourselves.

In the resettlement of the peace relations of the world, both political and commercial, the United States of America will have a powerful voice. The great strength and vast resources of that people and the independence which their position gives them of local European rivalries, should combine to add greatly to the weight of their counsel in future circumstances of tension between the nations. If, as there is every reason to hope and expect, British and Americans should continue to be inspired by similar political sympathies and motives, their frank co-operation is far more likely to conduce to the maintenance of the world's peace than are many of the sanguine proposals for ever to abolish war from the earth—the Utopian dreams of well-intentioned men, which for some generations to come are not likely to be realised. The United States have entered once for all the field of world politics. The British Empire, all men now recognise, means very much more than the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland, and it cannot but be that the future destinies of the world—the future peace of the world—will largely depend on the course pursued, let us hope jointly, by the great Empire and the great Republic.

Statesmen in all the belligerent countries profess a desire, no doubt quite honestly, to accomplish as soon as possible a twofold object—the ending of the present war, and the securing that the peace of the world should not again be broken. It is certain, moreover, that amongst the people in every belligerent or neutral country the desire for an early peace is strong. It would be strange if it were not so after four years of war “in which the killed alone can be counted by the million, while the total number of men engaged amounts to nearly twenty-four millions.” In these circumstances at the end of November, 1917, Lord Lansdowne did

well to ask the British public to join him "in scanning the horizon" to discover, if possible, some prospect of a lasting peace; "for without a lasting peace we all feel that the task we have set ourselves will not be accomplished. Those who look forward with horror to the prolongation of the war, who believe that its wanton prolongation would be a crime, differing only in degree from that of the criminals who provoked it, may be excused if they too scan the horizon anxiously in the hope of discovering there indications that the outlook may, after all, not be so hopeless as is supposed."

Lord Lansdowne is, perhaps, better entitled and more competent than any other man in the British Empire to give advice to his countrymen at such a time. His high character as a statesman, his successful conduct of our foreign affairs for many years, his position of absolute independence from party or personal bias, should surely render his considered views as well worthy of the consideration of his countrymen, as the articles, the paragraphs, and the headlines of the halfpenny newspapers! The indignation of the latter and of those associated with them and of their *clientèle* at Lord Lansdowne's advice, manifested itself in language of almost incredible violence and vulgarity; and the campaign of detraction and abuse as regards the letter and its author was rendered all the easier to some controversialists by the refusal of publication to the letter itself and by directing the attention of their readers only to the travesties of it in their own "patriotic" columns.

What, asks Lord Lansdowne, in this wicked communication which it seems should have been kept from the public, are we fighting for? "To beat the Germans? Certainly; but that is not an end in itself. We want to inflict signal defeat upon the Central Powers, not out of mere vindictiveness, but in the hope of saving the world from a recurrence of the calamity that has befallen this generation." He agrees entirely with the formula made use of by Mr. Asquith, and as he says universally approved. We are seeking to obtain reparation and security. "Both are essential; but of the two, security is perhaps the more indispensable. In the way of reparation, much can no doubt be accomplished; but

the utmost effort to make good all the ravages of this war must fall short of completeness, and will fail to undo the grievous wrong which has been done to humanity. It may, however, be possible to make some amends for the inevitable incompleteness of the reparation if the security afforded is, humanly speaking, complete. To end the war honourably would be a great achievement, to prevent the same curse falling upon our children will be a greater achievement still."

The next war, Lord Lansdowne goes on to point out, will be even more dreadful than this one. "The prostitution of science for purposes of pure destruction is not likely to stop short. Most of us, however, believe that it should be possible to secure posterity against the repetition of such an outrage as that of 1914. If the Powers will, under a solemn pact, bind themselves to submit future disputes to arbitration; if they will undertake to outlaw, politically and economically, any one of their number which refuses to enter into such a pact, or to use their joint military and naval forces for the purposes of coercing a Power which breaks away from the rest they will indeed have travelled far along the road which leads to security."

Lord Lansdowne then points out that in support of this principle there seems to be very general agreement. President Wilson, the German Chancellor, the Pope, the Austrian Government, Mr. Balfour, would rejoice to see some international authority vested with the power of preventing or limiting hostilities (and to these may be added the not less weighty concurrence of Lord Grey of Fallodon). International sanction, says Lord Lansdowne, would operate in one of two modes, "The 'aggressor' would be disciplined either by the pressure of superior naval or military strength, or by the denial of commercial access and facilities. The proceeding of the Paris Conference show that we should not shrink from such a denial if we were compelled to use the weapon for purposes of self-defence. But while a commercial 'boycott' would be justifiable as a war measure, and while the threat of a 'boycott' in case Germany should show herself utterly unreasonable, would be a legitimate threat, no reasonable man would surely desire to destroy the trade of the Central



Powers, if they will, so to speak, enter into recognisance to keep the peace, and do not force us into a conflict by a hostile combination. Commercial war is less ghastly in its immediate results than the war of armed forces ; but it would certainly be deplorable if after three or four years of sanguinary conflict in the field, a conflict which has destroyed a great part of the wealth of the world, and permanently crippled its resources, the Powers were to embark upon commercial hostilities, certain to retard economic recovery of all the nations involved."

Lord Lansdowne considered that it would be necessary in self-defence to prevent the command of certain essential commodities and supplies passing into the hands of our enemies ; but subject to that reservation " it would surely be for our interest that the stream of trade should so far as our fiscal interests permit, be allowed to flow strong and uninterrupted in its natural channels."

As for territorial claims, whilst he agreed with the statement of the Allies' Note of January 10th, 1917, he felt also with Mr. Asquith that too much precision as to details would be unwise at the present time, and that there were many things which had best be reserved for future discussion and accommodation. " Some of our original desiderata have probably become unattainable. Others would probably now be given a less prominent place than when they were first put forward. Others, again, notably the reparation due to Belgium remain, and always must remain, in the front ranks ; but when it comes to the wholesale rearrangement of the map of South-Eastern Europe we may well ask for a suspension of judgment, and for the elucidation which a frank exchange of views between the Allied Powers can alone afford."

These questions, as Lord Lansdowne says, concern the Allies as well as ourselves, and they also would probably be prepared with us to examine, and if necessary to revise, the territorial requirements. That we were going to win the war was certain ; but its indefinite prolongation would spell ruin for the civilised world. " If the war is to be brought to a close in time to avert a world-wide catastrophe, it will be

brought to a close because on both sides the people of the countries involved realise that it has already lasted too long."

The hands of those who, in Central Europe, desire peace would, in Lord Lansdowne's belief, be strengthened if it were understood in the first place that there is no intention to annihilate Germany as a great Power; nor to impose upon her any form of government not of her own choice; nor, except by way of a war measure, to deny to her her place among great commercial nations; and that in the second place, after the war, we and the other Powers would together examine international problems connected with the question of the "freedom of the seas," and, further, that we were ready to enter into an international pact for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means. If the nations *could be made to understand* that on these points the difficulties of agreement were not insurmountable there would be better reason for hoping that the new year would bring a lasting and honourable peace.

Lord Lansdowne's views, a week later, received considerable support from President Wilson's declaration of policy in his message to Congress on December 4th, 1917. Also recognising that the first object of the Allies was to win the war, he went on to explain the nature of the peace for which the United States were fighting. "This menace of combined intrigue and force," that is, "the German Power, a thing without conscience or honour or capacity for covenanted peace, must be crushed," or be shut out from the friendly intercourse of nations. But when this Power has been defeated and they could discuss peace with spokesmen of the German people deserving of confidence, they—the United States, would be willing to pay ungrudgingly the full price for peace. In the settlement they were looking for they sought justice, for their enemies as well as for their friends; but peace must not come "before autocracy had been taught its final and convincing lesson, and the people of the world put into control of their own destinies." Thus Germany must withdraw from Belgium and Northern France. Austria, the Balkan States, and Turkey in Europe and Asia

must be delivered from the dominion of Prussian military and commercial autocracy. "But we do not wish in any way to impair or rearrange the Austro-Hungarian Empire. . . . Further, we intend no wrong against the German Empire, no interference with her internal affairs. . . . No one is threatening the existence, or the independence, or the peaceful enterprise of the German Empire." If, indeed, after the war the German Government and people could not be trusted by other nations, it might be impossible to admit them for a time to free commercial intercourse, but such a situation could not continue, and would before long cure itself. As regards the international "boycott" of Germany, and as to non-interference with her internal affairs, Lord Lansdowne and the President held therefore much the same views; and they were both agreed in thinking that the subject of the rights of passage of nations, great and small, on the ocean highways of the world should receive international discussion and settlement.

Lord Lansdowne's call for greater particularity of definition of war claims on the part of the Allies was responded to with some fulness, though none too soon, by Mr. Lloyd George in his speech to Trade Unionists on January 5th, 1918. A great advance was made by the Prime Minister in recognising the changes in the European situation since 1914.

After consultation with Mr. Asquith and Lord Grey of Fallodon and others, he had come to the conclusion that the time had arrived for a more frank and explicit statement of war aims on behalf of the British nation than had yet been made. They had never wanted war, but had been forced into it by "realising that their only alternative to it was to stand aside and see Europe go under, and brute force triumph over public right and international justice." It had never been their object to bring about the break-up of Germany. "Germany had occupied a great position in the world; and it was not their intention to question or destroy that position for the future. . . . Neither were they fighting to destroy Austria-Hungary, or to deprive Turkey of its capital, or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia-Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race." But the Allied Empires

had perpetrated gross wrongs and none of the declarations recently made by their statesmen had given any intimation that these would be redressed or had offered any basis on which peace negotiations could begin. Any territorial settlement after the war must be founded on the principle that government is to depend on the consent of the governed. Belgium restored and compensated. Alsace and Lorraine returned to the French. The frontiers of Italy to be redrawn. Servia, Montenegro, and Roumania to be restored. Armenia, Arabia, Mesopotamia and Palestine to obtain "a recognition of their separate national conditions." The future of the German colonies to be at the disposal of an international conference, which should have regard to the wishes and interests of the inhabitants. As regards the future they would "seek by the creation of some international organisation to limit the burden of armaments and diminish the probability of war."

It is difficult to see how the world in arms against the three Allied Empires could put forward much smaller claims than these ; unless they were prepared to acknowledge defeat, and accept the most formidable consequences which that would entail. The Prime Minister's tone on that occasion was moderate, and very much to be preferred to that adopted by too many speakers and writers in recent days—language which could only have the effect of hardening Germany, Austria and Turkey in fighting to the last for the bare existence of their States. If Lord Lansdowne is right in believing that in these countries there is a genuine desire for peace, the improved tone of Mr. Lloyd George's speech cannot fail sooner or later to have its effect. Nevertheless, the terms must seem hard to Germany, whose people have been largely kept in the dark as to the causes and history of the war, and whose military achievements on the Continent of Europe have naturally encouraged them to believe in the invincibility of their armies. The Prime Minister's speech may, and probably has, brought nearer a rational peace, for which, however, there still must remain a condition precedent—a signal defeat of the German armies.

If the belligerent nations really desire peace there should



be some better way of approaching it than by each side hurling at the head of the other, with vituperative language terms which are certain to be rejected. As yet there has, it would seem, been no opportunity when useful negotiations could have been actually entered upon. But it is only reasonable to suppose that the various Governments will, so to speak, "take soundings" privately, as to the real dispositions and inclinations of the nations, before anything like a real and formal approach takes place. If everything is to be left to the daily newspapers it will be a generation hence before any advance is made! But let statesmen with a will to peace "scan the horizon," which lightens and darkens as the war goes on, ever presenting to an experienced and steadfast observer indications of coming change. Peace negotiations, and ultimately peace terms, will have more regard to the actual and existing position and condition of the belligerents than to pre-war declarations of any of them. The statesmen of each nation on both sides of the great world war have to consider for themselves and for their Allies as to how far the situation will be bettered by a prolongation of the struggle. In public discussion, material considerations such as these are completely ignored, perhaps necessarily so, since outside official circles the true position of affairs, and the real condition of the belligerent Powers, are not accurately known. The "bluff" of belligerent newspapers, and even of belligerent Ministries, is a matter of course, and it would be unwise to take it as the serious enunciation of the irreducible terms on which alone peace can return to the world.

When peace at last does come, will the sanguine anticipations of those who tell us that it has come to stay, at least amongst the civilised nations of the earth, be realised? This, the greatest and most terrible of all wars in ancient or modern times, is, we are assured, in its essence a "war against war," a war to establish perpetual peace. "War is a relic of barbarism," all men are agreed. Our Prime Minister repeats the time-worn saying, whose truth nevertheless history may question. Such civilisation as the world has hitherto known has, alas! given the world no security

against war ; and the nations and races that pride themselves most on having outlived the " barbarism " of the past have not as yet been conspicuously successful in leading the world along the paths of peace.

There are, however, real grounds for indulging a reasonable hope that a much greater joint effort will be made than heretofore by the chief and most powerful nations of the earth to preserve, when it does come, the general peace, and to visit with condign punishment any would-be disturber of it. Not mere dreamers of a Golden Age ; but experienced statesmen and practical men, such as Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Asquith, Lord Grey of Fallodon and President Wilson, evidently believe that, having regard to the effect on men's minds of the terrible scourge of recent war, it will be possible to call into existence some general supernational authority armed with sufficient power to check or punish those who would disregard it. The whole world now realises more clearly than formerly that whenever two nations quarrel the general interest, not merely that of a couple of disputants, is at stake ; and that when once resort is had to arms, modern conditions make the position of neutrals more and more onerous and difficult. In sheer self-defence the world at large must protect itself against the ever-extending slaughter, suffering, devastation, and ruin which modern war entails.

There is more to be hoped probably from the changed spirit produced in men's minds and disposition by the terrible experiences of recent years than from the formal organisation of political institutions to guard the general peace. Even Prussia will have learnt the lesson that war may be much more than a triumphant march, in an enemy's country of a few weeks or months, to victory ; and if Germany comes to regard war with the feelings in which it is now regarded by most other countries, the world will have a more peaceful prospect before it. When militarism in Germany and Jingoism elsewhere have lost all their popularity ; when the spirit that animated Bright and Cobden and Gladstone, amongst British Liberal statesmen, and which was not without influence on their opponents, such as Peel, Aberdeen and Salisbury, pervades their countrymen in general ; and when

a similar spirit gains ascendancy in Europe amongst statesmen and people, war will have become infinitely more remote, and the general peace more secure, than any arrangements of conferences or world-congresses can make it.

The suggestions put forward are for the formation of a "League of Nations" to preserve peace by uniting against "an aggressor"; or for the erection of a supernational authority or tribunal with powers to enforce its commands on individual nations. It is encouraging to find that British and American statesmen approach these projects in a sanguine spirit; for the difficulties in the way of realisation are too evident to have been overlooked, and must therefore have been considered surmountable. Yet it is more than doubtful whether by any means of this kind the present war could have been avoided. It is not always easy to decide who is the "aggressor." He is always spoken of in the singular; but suppose he has friends and that two or more nations stand together? It does not do to suppose that all the good people are on our side, and that there is only one sinner on the other! Even where there are only two nations in violent disagreement, the question of "aggression" is not a simple one. In July, 1870, Great Britain held France to be "the aggressor"; and we have seen Morier's view as to how Great Britain ought to have preserved European peace. In the autumn of 1899 at the opening of the South African War, would the nations of Europe have held the British or the Boers to be the "aggressors"?

We are told that just as within every modern civilised State private war and the maintenance of troops by private citizens is forbidden, whilst the State itself undertakes to preserve the peace and to protect men's rights, so amongst individual nations in a reconstituted world, fleets and armies may be disbanded (though local police would, of course, be retained); whilst international peace would be maintained and national rights protected by the authority and power of a supreme tribunal, or council—the sole possessor of armies and instruments of war. It has been suggested also that "an aggressor" or refractory State might be threatened or

punished by means of a refusal by the others to have commercial intercourse with him, and so be brought into line. Thus an armed force and an economic "boycott" would be the weapons—the sanctions—by which the supreme authority would compel obedience to its commands.

Should anything of this sort be attempted, its success will depend upon how far there is mutual trust and confidence amongst the nations; and on their belief in the absolute power and impartiality of the supreme authority. It is only on the basis of the existence of such a state of affairs that within each State private citizens no longer arm themselves in order to obtain or defend their rights. Now as yet, if we cast our eyes back over the last half century, it is difficult to perceive much advance towards mutual confidence amongst the nations. There is little use in talking of disarmament or of limiting our forces when universal conscription of the whole population to serve in the army is generally approved. Perhaps in some quarters it may be intended to limit the strength of fleets but not of armies! As yet the great nations of Europe do not trust each other to such an extent as to enable them individually to dispense with the means of self-protection in reliance on the good faith of all their neighbours. It will be for the future to show what has been the effect on men and nations of the terrible tragedy of recent years. It is not yet clear that for a long time to come the strong man armed will be willing to throw his weapons aside and trust his rights and his safety to the sense of justice of his neighbours and their power of enforcing it.

Far more immediately hopeful is the prospect that "Greater Britain" in the sense that Sir Charles Dilke first used the words—men of British origin at home or abroad, in all parts of the world where they have settled, ever growing in numbers and in importance, as compared with the nations of Europe—will in future weigh the scales heavily in favour of world peace. The British Empire and the United States are the two great divisions of that people. If they can work together in hearty and perpetual alliance, there will be a greater safeguard for peace than the world has yet seen.

On our part, in what we hope will be the Grand Alliance



of the future, there is a good deal to be done to bring the constitution of the Empire into closer relation with modern facts. Amongst the consequences of the war will be a speedy attempt to reform and strengthen the connection between Great Britain and her colonies, giving recognition to the fact that it is the Empire as a whole that constitutes the "nation," when our foreign relations are in question. The war has brought together all British subjects in every part of the world in a way nothing else could have done. Our soldiers have fought side by side, and our statesmen have become personal friends working often in the closest co-operation. On what lines are we to look for a realisation of these hopes? Anglo-Saxondom is familiar with the consolidation of distinct and separately governed States into what are virtually "nations," self-supporting, responsible for their own peace and order, legislating for themselves, raising and controlling their own military forces; and men naturally ask, why, as the internal federalising of Canada and Australia has answered so well, the whole Empire should not be treated in similar fashion and be governed by a Parliament and Executive at Westminster representing all the dominions of the Crown in order to deal with imperial, not local, affairs.

As a matter of fact there is no real analogy between the circumstances which have brought about consolidation in our great dominions and those which are thought to render desirable a similar consolidation of the Empire. The expression common in recent years of "Sister Nations" describes, with a good deal of truth, the actual relations of the United Kingdom and her great self-governing colonies. The suggestion that each of these "Sisters," including the United Kingdom, should become "Provinces" or "States" in a federal system, subject to the rule of a supreme national Government, representative of them all, will not be accepted without much consideration. And if the United Kingdom is not to be taken as a "Unit" or "State" of the federation, but is to be itself divided into smaller States—England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales—the plan becomes more complicated than ever. This is indeed in the name of "Nationality" to destroy a "Nation." It is provincialism,

not nationalism, that is the moving spirit of a proposal to construct for the British Islands a constitution grotesquely unsuited to the facts and conditions of the present day. Wales for the Welsh ! What has an Englishman to do with Wales ? England for the English ! What has a Welshman to do with England ? In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for years after the two English and Scottish Unions, the sentiment of England for the English was a very strong one in South Britain ; but it is needless to say it was neither appreciated nor respected in Scotland, and now for many generations Englishmen have entirely thrown off every narrow provincial feeling of that kind towards their countrymen, from whatever part of the kingdom they may come. Equal rights between all citizens of the United Kingdom is the basis of our present system ; but no constitution, however ingenious, could create out of the people of the British Islands four " sister nations " which should have any sort of equality as between themselves. Equality of citizenship throughout the kingdom is one thing ; the political equality of the " Nationalities," into which some would divide it up, is another thing, and is made impossible by the facts of the case, and the conditions of the time.

There are evidently two quite distinct ideals held by those (and they include almost every one) who wish to bring Mother Country and colonies into closer political relationship. We may aim at a close federation of the United Kingdom and the great self-governing colonies ; placing them all for certain general purposes under a supreme Imperial Government which would be entitled to claim obedience from British citizens in whichever of the Federated States they may happen to live. Or on the other hand we may have in our minds the idea of a great *British League*, each " sister nation " remaining independent except so far as it volunteers through its Government to act in common with other members of the League. Each would no doubt send delegates, or representatives, from the local Government to discuss their joint policy ; but the Council so formed would not be an Executive Government for the Empire, superior to the local Government, and having itself

direct relations with the citizens. The council would resemble rather a conference between Allies who agree in a common policy ; but remain themselves entirely self-governing nations. Fortunately the Crown and flag, common to all of us, would always give an added sentiment of unity to a British League ; and the question whether close federation under a supreme Executive Government or a league is likely to serve us best must be discussed on grounds of practical utility and convenience, and with especial regard to the feelings of local nationality that prevail.

It is evident that financial and fiscal questions might easily arise to trouble the harmony of a closely federated Empire under a supreme Executive. A tax imposed for an Imperial purpose, for instance, to be enforced against the individual citizen by external authority ? Fortunately for the United States—the greatest federation that the world has seen—absolute internal free trade prevails ; so it is within each of our federated British colonies. But in any attempt to federalise the British Empire the strong protectionist sentiments of the colonies would at the present time probably defeat any attempt to build up a Free Trade Empire. Yet it is a great idea—that British subject should be able to buy and sell with British subject in any part of the Empire unhampered by tariffs ; just as American citizens are free to deal with each other, within the wide limits of the United States ; and it might still be left to each unit of the federation to indulge its own fancy of “ taxing the foreigner ” if it thought it wise so to do. Most essential, however, is it on matters of taxation and finance that a central authority should not impose its policy in opposition to local national feeling. An “ Imperial ” House of Commons vested with power to tax every part of the Empire for “ Imperial ” purposes, or an “ Imperial ” Executive to enforce its levies on individual citizens everywhere, would be a dangerous experiment in imperial constitution building.

Given the admirable spirit of a common patriotism that now pervades the Empire and given also the sense of colonial “ nationhood ” and independence of the Mother Country,

which is equally strong and likely to grow, it would seem that a great world-wide British League, united by the same sentiment for throne and flag, and in which each member of it is regularly and formally consulted on Imperial matters (such as our foreign relations), is likely to find more favour and to create fewer difficulties than a closer organic union.



## CHAPTER XII

### BEGINNING A NEW ERA

WHAT is to be the outcome and permanent result of this great world convulsion? The evils it has caused are present to us. The gain is yet to be. There are despondent seers amongst us to whom it almost seems that our boasted modern civilisation itself may succumb to the deadly disorders and demoralisation to which "modern man" has become a prey, making way, as other civilisations have ever done in their turn, to some new system under which future generations will run their appointed course. Most of us "modern men," however, "knowing in truth little of our forerunners" and nothing of our remote posterity, must content ourselves with a less wide sweep of speculation, and confine our attention to present-day facts and that stage of "developed" humanity to which the twentieth century A.D. has accustomed us.<sup>1</sup>

We are in the very midst and crisis of a great conflict of ideals as well as of a struggle between nations. And whilst on every side passion and violence are seen distorting reason and judgment, and in flagrant conflict with Christian morality, the right and the wrong never stood more clearly distinguished than in this war for and against the Prussian and German doctrine of militarism, involving the attempt to give world-wide domination to the most powerful national army that men have seen since the fall of Rome. In the victory of the Allies lies the only hope of freedom, and progress, and peace for the nations. They are at war with an odious *system*. Is it to be wondered at that men at such a time should hold up to odium the whole Teutonic race? Nevertheless Germans are *not* monsters; and when peace comes British statesmen should be the first to protest against a race hatred which more than anything else will tend to render that

<sup>1</sup> "Modern Man and his Forerunners," by H. G. F. Spurrell, 1917.

peace insecure. It will of course be long before friendly relations can be re-established. But in the long run passions do subside, and even racial hatreds, witness France and England, though they require time to cool. We and the Germans are still at war ; and " the worst of war," says Lord Morley, with much general truth, though there have always been some men not swept off their feet in the stream, " is that it ostracises, demoralises, brutalises reason. Even Nelson, our glorious and most lovable of heroes, swore that he would like to hang every Frenchman who came near him, Royalist and Republican alike. Hate takes root as a tradition and lasts." <sup>1</sup>

There are people doubtless (this war and all wars have shown it) who account hatred as the highest form of patriotism, with whom always the enemy are an evil race, vermin to be extirpated from the earth. This is not a sentiment often shared by our soldiers and sailors engaged in actual warfare with their foes. Nelson's language just quoted was spoken in hot blood ; and men and sailors should be allowed on occasion to swear at large, and not be held strictly accountable for every word as if it had been spoken before a judge and jury. His countrymen remember better other words of Nelson, uttered on a solemn occasion, just before Trafalgar, how on his knees he prayed, " May the great God I worship grant to my country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory ; and may no misconduct in any way tarnish it ; and may humanity in victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet. . . ."

So far, unfortunately, it cannot be said that the spirit of militarism, though it has united against the Central Powers of Europe most of the civilised world, shows any sign of loosening its hold upon the German people. We have noticed the tone and quoted the language of pre-war leaders of German " Jingoism." We know now the objects these men had in view and the means by which they hoped to accomplish them. Yet, after all the experience of recent years, the only lesson they seem to have learned is that till the outbreak of the war Germany had not been military enough !

<sup>1</sup> " Recollections," by Viscount Morley.

The machine was not perfect. The people had not been sufficiently identified with the army, nor had they merged and concentrated the whole of their aspirations and efforts in making that army victorious against and over the whole world. Their army should have been larger and better equipped. Their "belaurelled fleet" should have been rendered capable of asserting dominion on the seas. Greater readiness should have been shown at the beginning of the war to make use of the advantages modern science put at their command. Another time they would be better prepared and would do better.

These are the views quite recently put before the German people by General Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, deputy chief of the General Staff and one of the most distinguished of their military writers.<sup>1</sup> The book is remarkable for its calm, unimpassioned tone, whether treating of the military preparations and performances of friends or foes. There are few patriotic boastings, and even fewer revilings of the enemy, to be found in its pages. The recent strenuous years of warlike operations are subjected to a businesslike examination with a view to keeping the science and practice of war abreast of the never-ceasing developments of these so-called civilised times. The cool temper and moderation of language are more impressive, and indeed more formidable, than the violent expressions of inextinguishable hatred in which German writers and speakers so largely indulge. Is this quiet tone of resolution on the part of a military writer to be taken as truly representing the deep and permanent feeling of the German people, or merely the sentiments of the military profession and caste? No better justification than this book could be found (were justification needed) for that wholesale denunciation of militarism in which every British statesman, political party, and citizen, have recognised the real enemy with which we were at war—the foe that had to be destroyed or rendered powerless unless the cause of the Allies were to end in failure.

Every effort must be made, says the General, to preserve in the future this spirit of German militarism, which

<sup>1</sup> "Deductions from the World War," Constable & Co., 1918.

has stood the test of war, because with it the German world-position stands or falls. This militarism is at once monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic ; and depends on the system by which the army is officered.<sup>1</sup> And "only under the absolute command of a War Lord can an army achieve a really vigorous development. It cannot be emphasised too often what an immense debt the Prussian army, and therefore with all Germany, owes to Prussian kings." And perhaps Europe also may remember a little of what it owes to them ! "If," says the Baron elsewhere, "our enemies, to whom, with God's help, our militarism will bring defeat, abuse it, we know that we must preserve it, for to us it means victory and the future of Germany."

The spirit of militarism has undoubtedly created the most formidable army that the world has ever seen, and this weapon, to use as he will, is in the hands of a supreme War Lord and of the military caste that surrounds him. The German people for the most part believe, and have been deceived by their rulers into believing, that the world war is on the side of Germany a defensive war against a great conspiracy of nations banded against them to destroy them. The German soldiers in the ranks, who have sacrificed their lives with a courage not less devoted than that of the Allies, have been inspired no less than they with true patriotism. The wickedness of the war is not theirs. Germany has been misgoverned, misled, deceived, by men themselves influenced by that ambition and craving for world dominion which most civilised nations had begun to hope were out of date in modern times. The German people do not know, have not yet learned, the truth. Nor except through defeat are they likely to learn it.

The best hope, therefore, for the future peace of Europe lies in that disillusion of the German people, that utter discrediting of the Prussian system of government, which only overwhelming defeat can bring them. Then there will be some prospect of the rise and growth in Germany of those liberal and popular ideas and institutions which have spread so widely in the modern world. Autocratic and

<sup>1</sup> "Deductions," p. 146.



irresponsible rule by a heavenly appointed and divinely inspired monarch can hardly in the nature of things permanently endure amongst a people not in most respects behind others in the emancipation of their minds from antiquated superstitions. But let the Germans themselves turn to better things, for the Allies would make a fatal mistake if they attempted to prescribe for Germans how they should be governed. This would go far to ensure the failure of a "foreign" system by giving popularity to every "patriotic" attempt to overthrow it.

In the eyes of President Wilson and of the great nation for which he speaks, the world war seems to represent itself as a democratic crusade for the overthrow of autocratic and monarchical Governments and the establishment everywhere of republicanism and pure democracy. But that was not the sentiment that originally brought into the field to resist Prussian aggression France and Russia, the British Empire and Italy. The struggle may possibly have tended to widen into that ; but in its origin the war on the part of the Allies was a purely defensive one, to safeguard their own freedom, the rights of smaller nations, and the liberties of Europe.

The world, after nearly four years, is weary of war ; but as the combatants on the two sides put forward victors' terms only, and as victory has not yet declared conclusively for either, no approach towards treating for peace has been possible. As yet no public overtures have been made by either side which any reasonable man could have expected the other side in the existing state of things to accept. It is, probably, useless at present to speculate in any detail over the ultimate rearrangements of territories, nations, and nationalities, that will come into effect. The fall of the Russian Empire has completely changed the outlook on affairs international both in Europe and Asia, and not until the nations have begun to interchange ideas at a general peace conference can future developments be foreseen.

Our own naval and military advisers are no doubt, like Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, drawing "deductions" from the history of the present war with a view to bettering the

defensive strength of the Empire. Their conclusions will be read some day with the deepest interest. To the ordinary civilian mind the old lesson has been reinforced by recent events. The *real* sovereignty of the seas *must* remain with the British Empire. Everything else is subsidiary to this. An army of five million or ten million of men could not protect the United Kingdom or Empire were the British navy or British commerce driven from the seas. Successful invasion of Great Britain by a Continental army, never our greatest danger, does not appear to have become easier than heretofore. It is elsewhere that Englishmen are looking for improved methods of defence—how to turn the tables against the submarine and the mine !

It *may* be that all speculations as to future wars will be rendered unnecessary by the success of novel international methods—leagues of nations, supreme world tribunals, or other expedients for enforcing perpetual peace ; but till a new and different spirit has grown up amongst men<sup>1</sup> it is impossible to place reliance on such protection to the extent at least of neglecting our own means of self-defence. Neither, again, does the promised prevalence everywhere of the most extreme forms of democracy afford assurance to those acquainted with history of the coming reign of perpetual peace. Nothing seems to make a leader of men more popular with the masses than successful war. It is the same with Autocratic Sovereigns, Constitutional Monarchs, Presidents of Republics, and Prime Ministers of Kings. In his opposition to the Crimean and Chinese wars even John Bright lost the support of the British democracy. It could not stand his “pacifism.” Yet everyone professes, and has always professed, to love peace and hate war.

“Cursed is the man, and void of law and right,  
Unworthy property, unworthy light,  
Unfit for public rule or private care,  
That wretch, that monster, that delights in war.”

So Nestor said three thousand years ago, and so men have said ever since and are still saying to-day ; but they go on fighting. Was Palmerston, then, very far wrong ? Before international relations become permanently peaceful there

<sup>1</sup> See article in *Quarterly Review* by Dean Inge.

must have come about within the nations themselves a general rise in the moral standards and character of men. In short, Christianity must have come nearer to completing its work before war is banished from the world.

In certain big matters John Bull, it has been well said, is an idealist, though no one ever prided himself more on the prosaic, unimaginative, practical nature that he believes he possesses.<sup>1</sup> Statesmen may talk of "security," and of "British interests," of which they think themselves the guardians; but he, as a matter of fact, is moved by his feelings. The sense of wrong, of injustice, and cruelty, perpetrated on weak and defenceless people under his own eyes, stirs his indignation. His pride is offended at the thought that German Kaiser and Austrian Emperor should brush the British Empire aside, as of no account, in opposing their project of enslaving Europe. His own temper is not always of the mildest. He, wherever he lives, in Great Britain, or Canada, or Australia, or New Zealand, or in countless islands, talks about defending his own hearth and home, which his imagination paints to him as in imminent danger of immediate invasion. Yet believing as he does, and has every right to do, in his fleet and his sailors, it is not really on account of tremors for their homes that millions of volunteers have left those homes to suffer and to die at the Dardanelles and in France, to march victorious into Bagdad and Jerusalem. Being, as he thought, righteously at war, John Bull was absolutely determined not to be beaten. Had the British people been the purely selfish wealth-making and wealth-hoarding nation that its foes and rivals have sometimes represented it to be, surely they might have made their homes safe on cheaper terms! With feeling and imagination in one scale and selfish calculation in the other, the latter in such a nature as John Bull's will always kick the beam. In no previous war, be it said, have the reason and policy of British statesmen, the feelings and passions of the British people, been more thoroughly at one.

<sup>1</sup> See Professor Pollard's collection of admirable essays lately published under the title of "The Commonwealth at War."

The British Empire and United Kingdom are entering upon a new era, in which it seems that constitution-building is to play a great part. Throughout history our nation has been wonderfully successful in adapting itself and its system of government to changing conditions, in repairing, improving, patching, its old institutions, giving formal recognition to the growth of custom. The success of our constitution is due to the fact that it has grown. We shall now, perhaps, become acquainted with a rasher, or at least bolder, statesmanship, which will enter upon new construction and attempt to build from the bottom on modern principles a constitution considered at the moment to be worthy of our day. Necessarily the first duty incumbent on statesmen will be to face the gigantic debt caused by the war, to make provision for its reduction, to regain our old pre-eminence in industry and commerce, and to raise by annual taxation the enormous revenue required to pay our way. Constitution-making and reconstruction are to follow, with a view to satisfying all those aspirations for what Professor Gilbert Murray calls "The New Order at Home," under which, by means of social legislation, England is to be made a better and happier place for Englishmen to live in.<sup>1</sup>

Unless Liberalism has entirely changed its nature, many Liberals will continue at least to put a high value on individual freedom, and even to place more confidence in the individual effort of Englishmen to conduct their own affairs to the advantage of themselves and of the nation than in the universal State regulations so dear to the socialistic mind. There lies the danger of modern democracy, viz., that in alliance with advanced Socialism the free spirit and individual energy that have made England should be repressed by the almost ubiquitous management of State officialism. Call it popular government, if you will; in fact that is nothing but bureaucratic rule!

The future of the country will depend largely, whatever changes may be made in the constitution, on the character

<sup>1</sup> "The Way Forward," three articles on Liberal policy by Gilbert Murray, with Preface by Viscount Grey, 1917.



and qualities of those men who are chosen to govern it. In the past and up to the present time our Ministers and both Houses of Parliament have been composed of men of whom the immense majority enjoyed the general respect of their countrymen and neighbours. Of course here and there an ambitious self-seeker has sought and won political fame ; but it would be a libel on English History to accuse British Ministries or Houses of Parliament of having been mainly manned by political adventurers. In some democracies the " politician " has acquired a bad name ; and even here superior persons (in their own eyes) are beginning to fling the word, as an opprobrious epithet, at the heads of those statesmen with whom they differ. It would indeed be a novelty and a calamity to this country no longer to be led or governed by men who are amongst the highest type of its citizens, and that the life political should be abandoned by those who had felt it to be the highest honour to serve the State, in favour of men who regarded it only in a professional aspect, as a means of feathering their own nests, or where perhaps prizes were to be won more easily than in other lines of life.<sup>1</sup>

It is to be hoped that the introduction of universal suffrage will tend in the long run to increase throughout the whole population a sense of common citizenship, and to weaken mere class sentiments and jealousies. In some respects these last have bulked too largely in the speeches and programmes of those who profess exclusively to speak in the name of " labour." If labour is to take a larger part than heretofore—indeed the principal part—in the future government of the nation, it must widen its outlook with its enlarged responsibilities. All classes must make common cause in carrying on the work of nation and Empire. Of course, opinions will differ and political parties will contend ;

<sup>1</sup> Lord Northbrook writing to his son, when meditating on his future career :—

" Political life has its ups and downs, its cares and its pleasures like other lines of life. If, indeed, power, or office, or some wretched peerage is the object of a public man, of all men perhaps he is the most miserable ; but if his opinions are approved by his conscience and his course is honest he will find that labour in the cause of duty has its blessings, whether he is in office or not " (" Memoir of the first Earl of Northbrook," by Sir Bernard Mallet, K.C.B.).

but the aim and object of them all must remain the same as it has been in the past, viz., the safety, the welfare, and the greatness of the nation.

It is more than possible that in the eyes of history the chief importance of the changes inaugurated or carried out under the Ministry of Mr. Lloyd George may lie less in the vast work actually accomplished in a period of national crisis than in the foundations that have been laid for a new departure in the political and social life of the British people. In a very recently published Parliamentary Blue Book the "War Cabinet" has itself put before the public an account of its work in the year 1917. In truth it is a wonderful record of the transformation under stress of circumstances of a great industrial and commercial people, whose prosperity and success in the world were mainly due to the energy and effort of the individual citizen—free so far as law was concerned to do what work he chose in his own way—into a vast State organisation, run by half a dozen Ministers of the Crown, with the greater part of the population as their employees and the capital of the nation at their command ; with power to order services, to fix prices, to determine rates of wages, to enforce sumptuary regulations, and generally to dictate in what manner British citizens should employ their energies and live their lives.

The efficiency of the War Cabinet to perform that sort of war work which belongs to the province of statesmen fully as much as to that of professional soldiers it will be for a later day to estimate. The larger strategy of a world war is necessarily founded on considerations which are both political and military, and must be decided upon by the advisers of the King, on behalf of the nation. The direction of a campaign, like the command of an army on the battlefield, is, of course, the business of the professional soldier, and it is a most important function of the Cabinet to see that the very best men in the service hold the all-important military positions. So, of course, with the navy. But the *supreme* authority over the army and navy of the nation must necessarily be the Cabinet of the King responsible to the nation's representatives in Parliament, just as in the

American war of secession it was President Lincoln, not General McLellan, the commander of her armies, who personified the nation ; who was trustee for and who saved the Union.

In no war previously waged by this country have the military and naval commanders had such complete control over the carrying on of the war by land and sea, entirely unhampered by civilian interference. Statesmen and the nation have made gigantic efforts to meet the demands of our chief soldiers and sailors. Mr. Asquith, as has been said, struck the right note by appointing, within a few hours after the declaration of war, Lord Kitchener, a professional soldier, to be Secretary of State, and by giving him through years and days of trial the most loyal and hearty support. Whatever the professional soldier asked for, the Government for his sake and their own laboured their hardest to supply ; and their achievement in that direction has been almost miraculous, and is duly recorded in the " War Cabinet Report " above referred to. Whether what has been done has always been wisely done, and the millions poured out have been usefully and unwastefully expended, will some day come to be considered. At present it is intended to notice only those parts of the Report that seem likely to affect the post-war conditions and habits of English citizens.

The " Report " is not unlikely some day to be utilised by a socialistic section of the community as almost amounting to an advanced political programme. For the first time, it tells us, " the possibility of fixing relatively stable world prices for fundamental staples has come within the sphere of practical politics." The State has even taken the drastic step of fixing the price of the 4 lb. loaf at 9d., at a considerable loss to itself. Thus the war, and especially " the year 1917, has brought a transformation of the social and administrative structure of the State, much of which is bound to be permanent." The powers of the Central Government have been expanded, and also much work has been done by local authorities and new bodies such as the War Agricultural Executive Committees, and the Local Food Control Committees. " The whole community has received an education in the problem of practical democracy, such as it has never had

before ”; and as the Report says, truly enough, the changes introduced in the year 1917, though brought about with no object other than that of speedily winning the war, “are bound to produce lasting and far-reaching effects on the social and economic life of the community.” In almost every direction—industrial, commercial, agricultural—Government management and control, or at least management by local State-created and State-regulated authorities, is taking the place of that of private citizens, whilst a “Ministry of Reconstruction” is already occupying itself “not so much with the question of rebuilding society as it was before the war, as of moulding a better world out of the social and economic conditions which have come into being during the war.”

It is not, or at least ought not to be, the business of a “War Cabinet,” called into being by stress of circumstances and for a special purpose, to draw up a political programme even for giving us “a better world” to live in. It is theirs to do what is necessary to win the war. Organic and fundamental reforms may be very desirable; but the British people would like to see them introduced and supported by responsible statesmen after public discussion and parliamentary debate. “Speakers’ Committees,” and “Irish Conventions,” and “compacts” between party whips in the House of Commons may possibly facilitate the addition of far-reaching and irrevocable measures to the Statute Book. The new machinery for Constitution-making would seem to relieve individual statesmen and Ministers from responsibility, which is exactly what is not wanted. In this way it may be doubted whether we shall ever get a Constitution “that will march.” The Statute Book is not the last chapter in the history of any great reform. In the past, at all events, *this* country has thought itself entitled to know where it was going, to demand from its statesmen even with some particularity where they were leading it.

The task *now* imposed on the statesmanship of the world is to establish world peace. *Then* it will be for the statesmen of the several nations to preserve to the best of their ability in their own countries liberty and order, to promote general



prosperity and increase the contentment and well-being of the people.

“The World’s great age begins anew,  
The Golden Years return,  
The Earth cloth like a snake renew  
Her winter weeds outworn.  
Heaven smiles—and faiths and empires gleam  
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.”

Perhaps in the good time before us poetry may find its way even into our Blue Books ! Still, some prosaic periods must be gone through ere, in a world still imperfect, such great things come to pass.





## Redwood Library

---

### SELECTIONS FROM THE RULES

---

1. Three volumes may be taken at a time and only three on one share. Two unbound numbers of a monthly and three numbers of a weekly publication are counted as a volume.

2. Books other than 7-day and 14-day ones may be kept out 28 days. **Books cannot be renewed or transferred.**

3. Books overdue are subject to a fine of one cent a day for fourteen days, **and five cents a day for each day thereafter.**

4. Neglect to pay the fine will debar from the use of the Library.

5. No book is to be lent out of the house of the person to whom it is charged.

6. Any person who shall soil (deface) or damage or lose a book belonging to the Library shall be liable to such fine as the Directors may impose; or shall pay the value of the book or of the set, if it be a part of a set, as the Directors may elect. All scribbling or any marking or writing whatever, folding or turning down the leaves, as well as cutting or tearing any matter from a book belonging to the Library, will be considered defacement and damage.



MAR 6 1920

F<sup>o</sup>FE · E75

WITHDRAWN

